THE Hudson REVIEW

DANIEL HOFFMAN:
From Brotherly Love

MARVIN MUDRICK:
The Unsung Hero

JAMES McCONKEY:
Passages Early and Late—a memoir

DEAN FLOWER:
Jane Eyre's Heirs

BARBARA KERR DAVIS:
Declaration of Dependence—a story

Poems by GREG KUZMA, JAMES BAKER HALL, JANE ELLEN GLASSER, ANDREW HUDGINS.

Chronicles by CHARLES W. MILLARD AND CIA B. SIEGEL.

Reviews by ROBERT MARTIN ADAMS, GUY DAVENPORT, VERNON YOUNG, DAVID KUBAL, JEROME MAZZARO, GEORGE KEARNS.

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"In recognition of his outstanding accomplishments as a novelist and man of letters"

V.S. Naipaul

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THE Hudson Review

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To Our Readers

A new book by an Advisory Editor of THE HUDSON REVIEW has recently been published. In accordance with our policy, the book will not be reviewed in these pages, but is listed below for the interest of our readers:

FREDERICK BROWN: *Theater and Revolution: The Culture of the French Stage.* Viking. $20.00.

CORRECTION. William H. Pritchard writes to us as follows: "In my review of Jack Richardson's *Memoir of a Gambler* ('Fictional Fixes,' Summer 1980), I carelessly conflated him with the art critic and reviewer, John Richardson. My apologies to both parties."

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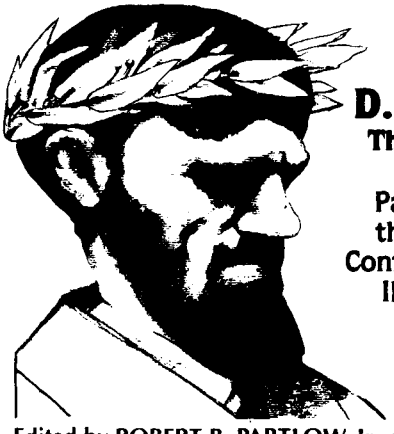

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MARVIN MUDRICK

The Unsung Hero

FICTION NEEDS TO GET ITS CHARACTERS FROM SOMEWHERE, and why not from history? which teems with characters all right but has the knack of making them look superfluous or interchangeable. It's easy, for instance, to think of Europe in the sixteenth century as a train of events, incentives, pressures, configurations, the inexorabilities of Providence or historical process with names sitting here and there along the corridors like labels on suitcases. Luther says the word and presto! the Church Indivisible starts to shudder and split; but if Luther didn't say it somebody else would. Henry VIII happening to have a wife already (daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella, that serviceable couple who a generation earlier had done God's still undivided work by defeating the Moors, banishing the Jews, uncorking the Spanish Inquisition, and sending Columbus to convert the heathen), the King against the Church's apoplectic opposition sets his heart on a divorce because he wants to marry Anne Boleyn—he's a stickler for the proprieties—but after all it's too late to keep the faith, it's less Henry than breakdown and division, the general drift of things (God, Providence, history), that forces the possessive old Church to fumble away its millennial grip on England. Toward the middle of the century the German states have accomplished on their own what seems a free-wheeling man-sized miracle by sorting themselves out, with the unenthusiastic consent of their Catholic overlord the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, as Lutheran or Catholic; but you can bet they haven't circumvented old mother history, who lightly postpones till the next century the religious war that will lay Germany low before the Reformation is accommodated into the bosom of history. The Netherlands are in rebellion, the liveliest and most cosmopolitan country in Europe, which prodigies of dynastic matchmaking have placed under the heel of the last feudal despotism in Europe, but which at the end of many years of desperate contention will surely win through because oth-

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erwise where's the march of progress or the triumph of the masses that vindicates the general drift of things? History is so plausible all by itself that it seems to deny its characters the freedom of fiction; yet as a matter of fact the revolt of the Netherlands has a villain and a hero both of whom are as free as fiction, take off on their own, don't hesitate to buck trends and tendencies as flagrantly as characters in epics, novels, plays, operas. So the characters of history have been known to burst out of history, notwithstanding our suspicion that they're labels on suitcases or plaster busts or reflections in funhouse mirrors, unfit for life or fiction.

King Philip II of Spain was the last medieval villain (autocrat and executioner, benighted, bigoted, more Catholic than the Pope, cleaving to the dead letter); Prince William of Orange was the first modern hero (advocate and moderator, worried, tolerant, less Calvinist than Calvin, honoring the spirit by letting it alone); and for twenty-five years, till Philip managed to bring off William's assassination, they opposed each other like darkness and light and gave history a chance to be as modest as it seldom is. (Of course as between any pair of adversaries—say, St. George and the dragon—it's possible not only to affirm the white and black but to argue that white is black and vice is versa, e.g. to dispute the account in Schiller's *Secession of the Netherlands* or Motley's *Rise of the Dutch Republic* by explaining that Philip was the last-ditch defender of the Faith against Prince William the Apostate and Luther the Arch-Fiend and worse: W. T. Walsh's *Philip II,* a manic exhumation of the "Most Catholic King" from his last ditch that was published by a U.S. Catholic press during Hitler's heyday and even got a rave review in the *Times-Lit-Sup,* traced both the revolt of the Netherlands and the coming of Protestantism to a worldwide Jewish conspiracy aided and abetted by at least two Popes. Then there are those who like to think that give or take a little here or there and now or then people are pretty much the same anytime and everywhere, that things get blown up out of proportion, that the Spanish Inquisition was probably a weekend birdwatchers' club and Philip its recording secretary and that in any case he was merely as isn't the worst or best of us a reflection—in a funhouse mirror?—of his age. This hypothesis, which is a tad more depressing than Walsh's, resembles in its condescension a recent mealy-mouthed anthropological hypothesis concerning the practice of cannibalism: that there wasn't any, that there wasn't ever an extended or nuclear family anywhere that ate people day in and day out, it was

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nothing but loose talk by tribes on the other side of the mountain, who didn't eat people either. Well, once in a while they ate people, but only at Easter and Thanksgiving.)

Philip of Spain and William of the Netherlands were in their separate ways sons of the same father. Philip inherited the Netherlands (much larger than the present Netherlands—it included modern Belgium and parts of modern France) as well as Spain, Naples, Sicily, and half the Western Hemisphere from his natural father, the Emperor Charles V (and would have had Germany and Austria also if Charles's brother Ferdinand hadn't declined to surrender his claim on the Imperial succession), but, born and brought up in Spain, he knew his father mainly by mail and his father's Court in Brussels not at all; whereas William, the preëminent noble of the Netherlands, had passed his childhood and youth at the Imperial Court as the Emperor's precocious confidant and counselor and in all but law his adoptive son: the good brother armed with love and favor, the bad brother armed with powers and principalities. When Charles had to appoint a commander-in-chief for his army in France he chose the 22-year-old William, not from any sign of military talent but because he trusted him as he didn't trust any of his experienced commanders; the same year he appointed him to the Council of State; when he decided to abdicate, he chose William to convey the Imperial crown (which Philip had coveted) to the new Emperor; at the assembly of the States-General in Brussels at which he turned the Netherlands over to Philip, who was among the dignitaries in the audience, the old Emperor supported himself with one hand on a crutch and the other on the shoulder of William of Orange. Philip hated William from the outset, no doubt jealous of his father's partiality; but for a few years the two men maintained the semblance of a personal connection because the Emperor had wanted them at least friends if not brothers: Philip was godfather to William's first child (Philip William); when William's wife died suddenly, Philip sent a conventional message of condolence and William may even have startled the young King into momentary sympathy by answering it with a burst of anguish—"I am the unhappiest man in the world."

Personal affairs mattered; but neither the Emperor's trust nor Philip's hatred made William miss the opportunity that the change of sovereigns offered to his country. The seventeen provinces forming the Netherlands, which Charles picked up as residuary legatee to various late-fifteenth-century royal marriages, had

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special rights and privileges spelled out in ancient charters and a habit of religious toleration and a tradition of self-government that no autocrat could be comfortable with and that slippery Charles never subscribed to or repudiated. Now, though, William and the other nobles insisted that, taking the oath, Philip bind himself expressly to what it only suited his father not to brush aside: "I, Philip, do vow and swear . . . that I will well and truly hold, and cause to be held, the privileges and liberties of all the nobles, towns, commons, and subjects which have been conferred upon them by my predecessors, and also the customs, usages, and rights which they now have and enjoy, jointly and severally, and moreover, that I will do all that by law and right pertains to a good and just prince and lord, so help me God and all His Saints." Further, on the eve of Philip's return to Spain the States-General wouldn't vote him an appropriation until he agreed to withdraw all Spanish troops stationed in the Netherlands. He agreed, and the money was voted; but at the harbor, while William sped the parting guest and waited for the royal party to embark, Philip began to complain about this insult to him of having a condition attached. William replied that the decision to attach it was the States-General's, but Philip broke in angrily, "Not the States but you, you, you!"

They never saw each other again. Once back in Spain Philip never left it for the remainder of his long life and never faltered in his aim of reducing the Netherlands to a captive colony by a policy of terror: the six-year military dictatorship of the Duke of Alba, whose "Council of Blood" had 18,000 persons put to death, "not counting men slain in battle and executed after victory" (by the latter phrase he meant his hanging of prisoners taken in battle and his massacres of the entire populations of captured cities); the burying alive or burning of "heretics" (i.e. Lutherans, Calvinists, Anabaptists); the public beheading or private strangling or poisoning of political leaders—till the Pope himself was moved to recommend some show of mercy (Pius V, not known for shows of mercy, who before his election had been the implacable "Grand Inquisitor for all Christendom").[1] From being under the Emperor Charles the richest source of revenues—richer than the New World with its Az-

[1] The specific figure of 18,000 civil executions by Alba—a bagatelle in comparison with credible estimates of the number of deaths under other rubrics of the Netherlands bloodbath—is interesting because it's attributed contemporaneously, though by Netherlands authorities, to a statement made by Alba himself when he left the country in 1573. A Spanish document of 1574 sets it at 6000.

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tec and Inca gold—for the Crown, the Netherlands became a bottomless pit into which Philip had to pour revenues from everywhere else to keep the endless war going; its bustling mercantile cities were sacked and huge numbers of the citizens who weren't murdered emigrated to England, as many as half a million out of a total population of three million, until even Alba (though not Philip) began to conjecture that razing the country and driving out those among its inhabitants who hadn't yet been exterminated mightn't be the best possible solution.

Philip could work on a smaller scale too. While his policy was becoming clear but before he despatched Alba to emphasize it, the Netherlands nobles sent two envoys, the Marquis of Berghen and the Baron of Montigny, to Philip to plead with him to ease up a little. (A certain monk, a spiritual adviser to Philip, had already informed him that Berghen was a heretic who deserved death because he had asked the Dean of St. Gudule's Cathedral: "Where in the Scriptures do you find that heretics ought to be burned or suffer the penalty of death?" It may have been an earnest question: Berghen was a Catholic.) Philip treated them with affability and banquets, but once their mission was over they discovered with alarm that he wouldn't let them leave. Berghen had the decency to pine away promptly and die; but because Montigny didn't he was clapped into a dungeon where he moldered for three years while Philip debated with his Council whether to execute him publicly or poison or strangle him on the q.t.; and when at length the decision to strangle him was arrived at (by Philip; the Council preferred poison) and carried out, Philip announced to the world that he had died of fever. Finally, a dozen years after Philip had secretly ordered William's assassination, he publicly proclaimed him an outlaw and promised wealth and glory to his murderer ("we will give him and his heirs in lands or ready money as he wishes, immediately after the deed, the sum of twenty-five thousand crowns in gold"); and when, twenty-five years after their last sight of each other, he learned that the deed had been done, his comment was "Better late than never" (but, tightwad about everything except his sepulchral palaces and his wars against the heretics, he stalled four years till he paid off not with gold but with a patent of nobility and a piece of William's confiscated property). He himself lived another fourteen years and died in his bed—one might say "peacefully and in the odor of sanctity" if it wouldn't sound like a grisly joke, because for the last two months of his life his body was

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a mass of suppurating and stinking open sores (out of which, according to one report, crawled maggots by the thousands), he suffered hellishly, bore everything with unshakable orthodoxy and calm, and said he was able to die with a good conscience because "never in his whole life had he wittingly wronged a single human being."

Fiction, phlegmatic suitor, doesn't break the doors down to take advantage of history. It wasn't till two centuries later that the first notable literary works were written about these events: Schiller's *Don Carlos* and Goethe's *Egmont*: both completed in the same year by the two most notable German poets, who hadn't yet become acquainted and didn't know they had both undertaken historical dramas on the same subject. The coincidence is surprising enough; but the time was ripe and almost overripe, it was 1787, at the zenith of the Enlightenment two years before the storming of the Bastille, and history could still though not for long be relied on to contribute steadily and serenely toward the liberation of the human spirit: the revolt of the Netherlands looked like the blood-red sunrise (Schiller was inspired to write not only his play but concurrently the opening volume of his projected comprehensive history of the revolt), its villains were the horrid past, its heroes the men of the dawning day. The other coincidence is that in neither play is William of Orange the hero or even a prominent character. In *Don Carlos* he is mentioned a few times but doesn't appear at all. In *Egmont* he appears in a single scene, trying to talk the hero into getting out while the getting is good; and the leaden dialogue makes him even duller than Goethe intends him to be as the prudent and calculating foil to a second speechmaker who Goethe hopes will sound like a high-spirited, loyal, generous hero:

> EGMONT: Has the King any more loyal servants than we?
>
> ORANGE: We serve him in our way; and among ourselves we can admit that we know quite well how to balance the King's rights against our own.
>
> E: Who but does likewise? We submit to him and are ready to serve him in all that is his due.
>
> O: But what if he should claim that *more* was due to him, and term disloyalty what we call standing up for our rights?
>
> E: We shall know how to defend ourselves. Let him assemble the Knights of the Golden Fleece; we will submit ourselves to their judgment.
>
> O: And what if the judgment should precede the investigation, punishment the judgment?

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E: That would be an injustice of which Philip would never be guilty, and a piece of folly of which I do not believe him or his councillors capable.

Schiller wrote a review of *Egmont* in which he complained that the hero, lacking any qualities of greatness, seems only a feckless cavalier in the fell clutch of circumstance; and maybe while writing it Goethe began to fear that Egmont would dwindle out of sight altogether unless he cut William back. But the violation of history is egregious. In the first place historians agree with rare unanimity about Egmont, whom the Dutch historian P. J. Blok sums up as "a finished courtier and valiant soldier, but otherwise . . . of little significance, vain, and without any political penetration." Insofar as he played a part in the revolt he played it as a subordinate to William, and insofar as he differed with him showed what the world might have called prudence if it had saved him but was right to call stupidity because it didn't. When Philip, having already made up his mind to unleash Alba and authorize a reign of terror, commanded his vassals in the Netherlands to take a new and slavelike loyalty oath ("to serve His Majesty, and to act toward and against all and every, as shall be ordered me on his behalf without limitation or restriction"), Egmont tamely took it and so did most of the other nobles except William, who refused on the grounds that he had already taken the regular oath, and that the new one was "unprecedented and general, against my conscience, and to the injury of the King and the country, and contrary to my allegiance as feudal lord, and subject of this land"; and he forthwith resigned all his offices. Philip's half-sister Margaret, Duchess of Parma, Regent of the Netherlands (till Alba took her place), begged him to reconsider, but he refused again, adding that "the new oath might compel him to act against the Provinces of which he was hereditary chief, against the Emperor, or even to kill his own wife since she was a Lutheran." He had correctly inferred that the new oath was the harbinger of the fatal crackdown, that for instance the concessions to religious toleration he had wrung out of Margaret would be annulled; his efforts to unite the nobles in resistance and to recruit help from Germany had failed; Alba was coming, and the nobles who stayed to greet him would be his first victims; the only prudent (unsuicidal) course was flight until the day when resistance became possible.

Meanwhile brush-fire hostilities were already flaring up: Ant-

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werp, center of world trade and the richest city in the world, was on the verge of ruin and pillage by religious rioting—the Calvinists were threatening revenge against the Catholics, whose loyalist troops had just routed and slaughtered a Calvinist force outside the city. Margaret asked William to do what he could to restore peace; and because, though no longer in the King's service, he was hereditary burgrave of the city, he went at once and on his arrival appeared alone before a mob of ten thousand enraged Calvinists armed with everything from pikes and sledgehammers to pieces of artillery (who screamed insults and threats at the Most Catholic King's lackey: "Die, treacherous villain!" shouted one of them, shoving an arquebus into his face but it was struck aside by somebody else), he carefully explained to them that their military force had been chewed up and that a mob on the same errand would be unlikely to do better. Having cooled them down a few degrees and gained time, he spent the next three days negotiating with the other factions in the city, then met again with the mob that was gathered in still greater numbers in the enormous market-square, explained to them the truce he had got the others to accept, and persuaded them they would be wise to accept it themselves. At the end he cried out for the last time in his life, "Vive le Roi!" and in response "the crowd of Calvinists raised one tremendous shout of 'Vive le Roi!' "

The city was spared, and William returned to his preparations for leaving the Netherlands. At Margaret's request he had one more meeting with Egmont, but neither could budge the other: William said that Philip intended to wreck the country, and "You will be the bridge across which the Spanish will enter this land"; he embraced Egmont and "both weeping, they took a last farewell" (William was abandoning his wealth and property and turning toward years of harried and comfortless exile: one account has Egmont saying, "Goodbye, landless Prince" and William retorting, "Goodbye, headless Count"; but they give the impression of having been too fond of each other to part on such an exchange). William left for Germany a step ahead of the hangman Alba, who came with secret orders from Philip "to seize the Prince first and foremost and bring him to execution within twenty-four hours," and then at his leisure dispose of such small fry as Egmont: when Cardinal Granvelle, one of Philip's advisers, learned that Egmont was caught but William had escaped, "What's the use of catching minnows," he exclaimed, "when the salmon jumps free?" (Alba,

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incidentally, was quite a phrase-maker himself. When Egmont welcomed him at the border, Alba turned to an aide and said loudly enough to be overheard, "Here is the great heretic"—in fact Egmont was Catholic, it was one of his reasons for remaining loyal—but then threw his arm round Egmont's shoulder as if he had been making a joke. After the sentence of death had been pronounced Egmont's wife came to plead for him, and Alba assured her that the next day her husband would "go free"—as no doubt, from a good Christian's point of view, could be said to have happened when the next day Egmont's head was chopped off.) Egmont is an ordinary man caught in a trap, William is one of the bravest and most magnanimous men who ever lived; Goethe's attempt to balance them off is an unhistorical nuisance; and though Philip's polemicists called William sly, crafty, uncandid, even a coward, Goethe doesn't do himself proud by allowing their poison pens the shadow of a justification.

But the play is claptrap from start to finish, most of it not just pompous and inaccurate but so persistently simple-minded that it begins to look like a deliberate travesty—Schiller isn't the only reader who asks himself why Goethe transformed Egmont from history's middle-aged, respectably married man with eleven children to the play's bachelor gallant with a sentimental bourgeois mistress:

> CLARA: Let me be silent! Let me hold you. Let me look into your eyes, find everything there—comfort and hope and joy and grief. (*She embraces him and gazes at him.*) Tell me! Speak! I do not understand. Are you Egmont? Count Egmont? the great Egmont who is so famous, about whom they write in the newspapers, to whom the Provinces cling?
>
> EGMONT: No, dear Clara, that is not who I am.
>
> C: What do you mean?
>
> E: Listen, Clara.—Let me sit down!—(*He sits, she kneels before him on a footstool, rests her arms on his lap, and looks at him.*) *That* Egmont is a bad-tempered, stiff, cold Egmont, who has to keep a firm grip on himself, put on now one expression, now another; harassed, misjudged, involved, while everyone thinks him light-hearted and gay; loved by a people that does not know what it wants; honored and praised by a mob with which nothing can be done; surrounded by friends to whom he cannot trust himself; watched by men who would use any means to get the better of him; working and striving, often to no purpose, usually without any reward—oh! how he fares and feels is better left unspoken! But *this* Egmont, my Clara, *this* Egmont is at peace, free to speak, happy, is loved and known by the best of hearts, which he too knows

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and presses to his own in perfect love and trust. (*Embraces her*) This is *your* Egmont!

C: Let me die so! The world has no joys after this!

(Holy liverwurst!) And Schiller also dared to find unworthy—"operatic"—the final scene, in the dungeon where Egmont has a vision: "*Music. . . . He falls asleep; the music continues . . . the wall seems to open, and a shining vision appears.* FREEDOM, *in celestial raiment, surrounded by a halo of light, rests on a cloud. She has* CLARA'S *features, and bends toward the sleeping hero. . . .* " Clara, by the way, has prepared for this apotheosis by perishing in the previous scene from an attack of hyperbole ("O fetter me, that I may not despair, cast me into the deepest dungeon, that I may beat my head against oozing walls . . . "), going down for the count so to speak; but don't leave yet, because back in his cell the count with comparable fervor hails the beating of the drums that signals his imminent deliverance from this vale of tears ("Hark, hark! How often has that tone led my free steps to the field of combat and victory!"), and soon he'll be winging like a big-assed bird in the direction of that celestial sugarplum awaiting him on Cloud Nine: "*Drums. As he advances toward the guards and the door rear, the curtain falls; the orchestra strikes up and ends the play with a symphony of victory.*" In this climactic tactic Goethe is soliciting from the organ-grinders of the world some traveling music to match his daydreams, and one hopes that when the play was put on he got what he deserved (sixty-nine variations on "Ach, du lieber Augustin"); but years later along came Beethoven who was impolite enough, without asking Goethe's permission, to compose the "incidental music" which is the only surviving work of art called *Egmont* (though Goethe would never know, because his ear for music was no better than his ear for death-cell heroics: he didn't care for Beethoven, nor did he take to Schubert's settings of his poems; oh no, not he, for the composer he positively madly doted on was Karl Friedrich Zelter).

As for Schiller's *Don Carlos,* like Goethe's *Egmont* it's first of all an historical drama about people who never existed. True, Philip is one of the major characters, not the villain as in Schiller's own history of the revolt and not the hero, but more like a hero than like the historical villain. Nor is William the hero or even on stage at all. The hero isn't even singular but a sort of Damon-and-Pythias duumvirate—one of them, Don Carlos, a romantic falsification of

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his historical namesake; the other, Rodrigo, Marquis of Posa, a wholly fictitious character.[2]

The historical Don Carlos is an odd armature on which to model a romantic hero. Some of the facts of his life look very promising if they are presented in a kind of shorthand: he was quick to anger and action; he hated his father, the wicked King Philip; he adored his beautiful stepmother, Elizabeth de Valois, to whom he had been betrothed before she was married off to his father; he was so fixed on going as Regent to the Netherlands that when Alba, who had been designated, came to say goodbye Carlos tried to murder him; he was finally imprisoned—and, some (including William) said, murdered—by his father; he died in prison at the romantic age of twenty-three, and two months later his stepmother died at the same age. These are the facts on which Schiller (following his source) bases his love-sick, high-mettled, liberty-loving prince. But the historical Carlos was also a physically and emotionally unattractive young man who seems to have had little interest in women except to insult and beat them for sport on the streets; who adored his stepmother not from amorous inclinations (they were both only fourteen during their brief betrothal, which seems to have been strictly a matter of State) but because the good-hearted young Queen showed motherly affection toward her husband's ungovernable and neglected heir; whose motive for hating his father (bitterly enough to confess to a priest that he intended to kill him), wanting to be off to the Netherlands, and trying to kill Alba was more likely thwarted ambition than political idealism. The official Spanish version of his imprisonment and death was that the risk he posed to the stability of the throne had become intolerable; he was therefore confined; during his imprisonment his rage and wilfulness—he went on a hunger strike, he indulged in monstrous gluttonies—forced his always fragile health to give way and he died. It's not beyond the limits of the probable that Philip killed him or ordered him killed, because Philip had a rather extreme view of autocratic responsibility; yet it must also be granted that Philip

[2] Both come directly from Schiller's source, which wasn't history but an "historical novel" written by a seventeenth-century French romancer named Saint-Réal. Everybody agrees that there is no historical basis for Posa; but I'm pleased to have noticed in a seventeenth-century Spanish biography of Philip a "Marqués de Poza," President of Philip's Council of Finance, about whom no personal information is given but whose name Saint-Réal may have found there and borrowed.

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was a good family man who for example wrote loving and playful letters to his (other) children.

But in *Don Carlos* what interests Schiller isn't historical truth (which belongs to the volume of history he wrote about these same events), it's the extravagance and grandeur of the feelings that might or should have been associated with it. In Schiller's play Carlos's love for the Queen is so high and nice that when at last they can talk a bit she needs only a few moments to convince him to deflect it toward serving and liberating his nation ("Elizabeth was your first love. Now let your second love be Spain"); in the interview between the Grand Inquisitor and the King, the power of the Church and the power of the State hurl warnings and denunciations at each other like thunderbolts from rival mountaintops ("If I did not now stand before you—by the living God! you would have stood before me thus tomorrow"); in the interview between Philip and Posa, the boundlessly idealistic Marquis compares the King to God Himself as he adjures him to "give us freedom of thought" and thus emulate God Himself—

> The rustling of a leaf
> Strikes terror in the lord of Christendom—
> *You* must fear every virtue. *He*—lest Freedom's
> Delightful presence be disturbed—He sooner
> Allows the entire ghastly host of Evil
> To rage throughout His universe . . .

(not the most delightful prospect to propose to "Philip" if he were the order-at-any-cost tyrant that the historical Philip in fact was); when Schiller's Philip in an Othello-like frenzy accuses the Queen of adultery, she defends herself from an altitude of indignation and courage that recalls by contrast the marshmallow helplessness of Shakespeare's heroines in similar crises—

> I am not accustomed
> To being questioned in the presence of courtiers
> As if I were a criminal . . .

—so that when Philip "thrusts . . . [his terrified little daughter, who has been a witness to the scene] roughly away," the Queen embraces her and, addressing herself to the child because the infuriated King is no longer worthy of being talked to directly, reminds

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whoever happens to be listening that the Queen is not only Philip's consort but a French princess still: "if the King refuses / To know you any longer I must send / Beyond the Pyrenees and have defenders / Come to take up our cause." The most concentrated instance occurs when Posa pays his farewell visit to the Queen: she discovers that he has served Carlos's hopeless love of her only because he expects it to incite Carlos to great deeds (e.g. the liberation of the Netherlands), and she suddenly understands that Posa, champion of freedom, bound in blood-brotherhood to Carlos and in unavowable love to her, committed to a glorious act of self-immolation, has accomplished his utterly private goal of tying together and experiencing all the great feelings at once—

QUEEN: You go, Marquis—
And yet you have not told me when we shall—
How soon we meet again.
MARQUIS: (*comes back again, his face averted.*)
We certainly
Shall meet again!
Q: I understand you, Posa—
I understand you very well—Why did
You do this to me?
M: He or I.
Q: No! No!
You plunged into this action which you term
Sublime. Do not deny it. I know you,
You have been thirsting for it this long time . . .

—and she appeals to him to let her try to rescue him, she is brave, she has friends in France; but he will not yield:

Q: There is no rescue?
M: None at all.
Q: (*leaves him and covers her face.*) Then go!
I shall esteem no man again.
M: (*throwing himself at her feet in the most vehement emotion*)
My Queen!
—My God! but life is beautiful!
(*He leaps up and walks rapidly away.*
The Queen retires to the inner chamber.)

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The talismanic name in Posa's pursuit of sublimity is William of Orange. To save Carlos and sacrifice himself, Posa writes a letter to William that he makes sure will be intercepted and read by the King's agents. Posa (like William) is assassinated at the King's command; and Carlos, confronting Philip, taunts him for his inferiority to the man he wished to befriend and could only murder:

> the letter
> To Orange he composed to rescue me—
> My God! It was the first lie in his life! . . .
> The splinters
> From his mind would have made a god of you.
> You have robbed yourself—
> What will you offer to replace a soul
> The like of this?
> (*A profound silence. Many of the grandees look away or cover their faces with their mantles.*)
> O you who stand assembled here all mute with horror
> And with astonishment—do not condemn
> The young man who has used such language to
> His father and his King—Behold this sight!
> He gave his life for me! Do you have tears?

—and when the distraught King is at last able to speak his feelings, he says: "Give me back this dead man. I must have him back."

It's a play full of archaic voices, written by an uncompromising young man (he was in his twenties) who goes on and on at unconscionable length and is never less than exalted, is in love with goodness and greatness and has the confident intention of reconciling them, borrows gigantically from Shakespeare and improves on what he borrows from—indeed the jealousy plot is just stolen from *Othello* and then redone in the right way: there's a Iago (divided into two characters, so that he can convincingly talk to himself: the King's confessor plus none other than the Duke of Alba) whom the King handles with so much authority and shrewdness that one never has the sense as in *Othello* of watching the slow murder of a helpless animal; the bright and beautiful Queen stands up so intrepidly against the horn-mad King that one never has the sense as in *Othello* of watching etc. Schiller dismissed the Birth-of-Freedom scene in Goethe's *Egmont* as "operatic," by which of course he meant that it tried to cover up its lack of brains with a patch of

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grandiosity; but there's another meaning of the word according to which no play in the world is more operatic than *Don Carlos*: it isn't grandiosity but grandeur that's in question: it's what Rossini meant when, having attended the premiere of Verdi's opera derived from Schiller's play, he declared that the new work "proved that Verdi was the only man alive capable of writing Grand Opera."

The nineteenth-century composers of opera had the good sense to direct their librettists often to Schiller's plays, which for example were the sources of four of Verdi's operas, one of them *Don Carlo*.[3] It's customary to jeer at opera libretti, but the libretto of *Don Carlo* preserves the contours and momentum of the play, prunes back many of Schiller's exaltations only to clear a space for Verdi's, and as a matter of fact is responsible for changes and additions that make one wonder why Schiller didn't think of them himself.

The two conspicuous changes in the plot both involve Posa. In *Don Carlos* it's the King who commands Posa's death; and, in the splendid scene between Philip and the Grand Inquisitor which follows the assassination, it's this very command which the Grand Inquisitor singles out as he denounces the King for usurping the prerogatives of the Holy Office, which has planned to do the job itself. In *Don Carlo*, however, not only does the King (as in the play) solicitously warn Posa that if he doesn't watch his language the Grand Inquisitor will get him ("Ti guarda dal Grande Inquisitor!"); but in the scene between Philip and the Grand Inquisitor, which here *precedes* and foreshadows Posa's death, the King defends his friendship with Posa while the Grand Inquisitor demands that "the innovator" be handed over to him; and it's not the King but the Grand Inquisitor whose agents murder Posa—so that this aspect of the libretto has a symmetry that Schiller misses and that alters the sense of Philip's mourning over Posa's body from a rather contorted sort of remorse to a simple gesture of loss and grief ("Who will give me back this man?"). There are two conspicuous addi-

[3] Verdi composed his opera to a French libretto (by Joseph Méry and Camille du Locle) with the title *Don Carlos*. I use the Italian title partly because, after its premiere over a century ago, the opera has almost always been sung in Italian and the arias are generally known by their Italian first lines, partly because the Italian title permits one to discuss the opera without having to keep telling the reader that it isn't the play. The version of the opera I'll be talking about is the one that incorporates most of Verdi's late revisions and restores the first act; the recorded performance I'm most familiar with is the one conducted by Solti, with a cast including Bergonzi, Tebaldi, Fischer-Dieskau, Ghiaurov, Bumbry, and Talvela.

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tions: the entire first act, a kind of prologue in which Elizabeth and Carlos at Fontainebleau meet and fall in love and almost at once learn their desolating fate; and the grand-opera scene with a cast of thousands at the auto-da-fé where heretics are marched in to be burned at the stake (Spanish-type historians irritably point out that *no* executions happened at an auto-da-fé, they happened *later* and *outside*!): both, especially the latter, provide Verdi with wonderful occasions for the sound and spectacle of individual and massed voices on a packed stage. And even the change to a "happy ending"—Carlos not under arrest as in Schiller but whisked away from the King and the Grand Inquisitor by the timely materialization of that *deus ex machina* the Emperor Charles V, or his revenant, in full regalia—makes for a spectacular operatic conclusion which at least doesn't feature a Goethean charade of heavenly cuties, and which has besides the advantage of Verdi's grandest and most somber concluding orchestral flourishes.

Less than a century after the Enlightenment, Europe was being washed by another wave of political optimism, and the last romantic idealists had their day. Verdi, like Schiller, hated tyranny and priestcraft; he eagerly applauded the diplomatic and military actions by Cavour and Garibaldi in behalf of liberating and unifying Italy (he was even ready to do some gun-running!); he composed operas with plots that the government censorship mangled because they suggested too nearly his political hopes, and with rousing arias that became patriotic rallying-cries for all Italians. So it was time for Philip and his invisible antagonist to take the stage again; and one pauses wistfully to try to imagine a duet by Verdi for Egmont and William at their last meeting or for Philip and William at any meeting or a great stage full of singers in gorgeous period costumes when William shows up at the Red Gate in Antwerp to quiet and convince the raging mob, because Verdi like Schiller can be trusted with such moments, he has the imagination for the true sublime and not, like Shakespeare, for the petulant-pathetic or the bloody-awful pretending to the sublime. (But we settle blissfully for what, accepting the text his librettists give him, Verdi enlivens it with: e.g. the marvelously transfiguring music of the soliloquy-arias—"Ella giammai m'amò," most affecting of all arias of unrequited love, as Philip despairingly muses that "she never loved me"; "O don fatale," the Countess Eboli's vehement lamentation on the curse of beauty; "Tu che le vanità," as Elizabeth, kneeling at the Emperor's tomb, sadly renounces the world.)

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Evil is the test of the sublime. Schiller's and Verdi's Grand Inquisitor doesn't after all say, "Jeez I'm sorry" or "Evil, be thou my good." For Shakespeare evil is just doing it and regretting it (Claudius and Macbeth) or play-acting and melodrama: Edmund or Iago is thrilled by his own wickedness: even in the opera that Verdi and Boito made from *Othello* Iago can't restrain himself from bawling out his self-conscious "Credo" in case anybody in the audience still hasn't guessed he's a double-dipped dirtball from blackest hell (because even Verdi's genius for sublimity can't find a basis in Shakespeare's pygmy villains); for Shakespeare virtue is an old lecher's *mea culpa*: Never trust a boy's love or a whore's oath, don't paddle in a lady's palm or twiddle with her placket, support your local king, and if you're lucky Iago won't come slithering your way, and just maybe you'll stop feeling so rotten most of the time. But for Schiller and Verdi evil is more virtuous than Shakespeare's virtue and most terrifying by its resemblance not only to good but to the best: their Grand Inquisitor is ninety years old, feeble, blind, and so strong in the assurance of his possession of the truth that he can disregard all human connections and outface all the kings and favorites of the earth; Schiller and Verdi understand that such men are sublime and the terrors of the earth, "a type" (as W. E. H. Lecky describes them in his *History of Rationalism in Europe*)

> that is singularly well defined, and is in many respects exceedingly noble, but which is continually marked by a total absence of mere natural affection. In zeal, in courage, in perseverance, in self-sacrifice, they towered far above the average of mankind; but they were always as ready to inflict as to endure suffering. These were the men who chanted their Te Deums over the massacre of the Albigenses or of St. Bartholomew, who fanned and stimulated the Crusades and the religious wars, who exulted over the carnage, and strained every nerve to prolong the struggle, and, when the zeal of the warrior had begun to flag, mourned over the languor of faith, and contemplated the sufferings they had caused with a satisfaction that was as pitiless as it was unselfish. These were the men who were at once the instigators and the agents of that horrible detailed persecution that stained almost every province of Europe with the blood of Jews and heretics . . .

—and anybody who listens to the deep-as-a-well duet of the two basses, Philip and the Grand Inquisitor, in *Don Carlo* can feel in his bones what Lecky (whose *History* is contemporaneous with Verdi's opera) is talking about. But then *Don Carlo* is the last and sublimest of all romantic masterpieces, so it may not be accidental that its

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subject is the sublimest episode in the history of Europe. William, though, never got to sing[4] or be sung to. He was too important, he blocked out the others, he did too much, it went on too long, there was too much geography between him and his royal assassin. Schiller chose Madrid and the heart of King Philip, assuming he had one. Goethe chose Brussels and Egmont, because visions of sugarplums danced in the riggish poet's head and William was too busy a man to be conceived of even by Goethe as spending his Saturday afternoons making speeches to sugarplums. For poets and composers William is the big man who wasn't there.

Among the numerous Williams of Orange he is the one whom because of a silly mistranslation history knows as William the Silent. A henchman of Philip's, either Cardinal Granvelle or the Inquisitor Peter Titelmann, called him "sluwe" ("sly"), and the Dutch was mistranslated into Latin as "taciturnus," which in turn was retranslated literally into the European vernaculars—a strange epithet for a man who was genial, approachable, and loquacious all his life. Later it was supposed, reasonably enough, to have derived from his behavior at the turning point of his life. In 1559 the French and the Spanish had concluded a peace treaty, and Philip sent three envoys to Paris to help the French celebrate it: Alba, Egmont, and William. The French king, Henri II, taking for granted that all the envoys were in Philip's confidence, brought up in a private chat with William the plans he and Philip had been working out to exterminate all the Protestants in Europe, beginning with that heretical pesthole the Netherlands. William not only kept his counsel but led the king on to disclose more and more: so "the Silent" because he knew when to keep his mouth shut; and it was at this moment, as he wrote many years later, that he came to understand that Philip was the enemy and that there would have to be a resistance to the death. Think of the duet that Verdi would have made of this scene!

[4] Not quite true. The patriotic tune that began to be heard in the Netherlands during Alba's terror was "Wilhelmus van Nassouwe," in which William is represented as singing a song of himself:

My life and all that is my own
I to your cause confide;
My brothers, loyal gentlemen,
Stand faithful at my side.
Count Adolf we left lying there
In Friesland's woeful fray,
His soul in the eternal life
Awaits the Judgement Day.

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There is a portrait of him painted during this year (the year also when he paid his respects to Philip at the harbor in Antwerp). He is twenty-six years old: a soberly handsome young man without shyness or ostentation: standing, in armor, his left hand on his helmet which rests on a table at waist level, his right grasping what seems to be a lance; his head long but not narrow with close-cropped brown hair; the face is three-quarters profile with the dark, contemplative eyes directed at the painter, a straight fine nose, the chin strong and with a cleft unconcealed by a wisp of beard, the wide firm mouth slightly downturned; and there is something in the face which, as one commentator remarked, "makes the observer forget William is a young man." But the portrait by no means exhausts the man. Before he went into exile he was one of the richest lords in Europe, he had a personal retinue of twenty-four nobles and eighteen pages, at his various palatial residences it snowed (as Chaucer says of his Franklin) meat and drink: he kept open house, the magnificence of his table was the talk of Europe, he maintained a huge staff of cooks and servants (once as an economy measure he discharged in a single day twenty-eight of his cooks), great nobles throughout Europe sent their cooks to school with William's, on one occasion Philip wrote from Spain begging William for a particular master chef of his. (During the worst years of his exile, unaccompanied and on the run just one step ahead of Philip's hit men, he coped quite well with reduced circumstances that obliged him to scrape along with occasional homely help from his brother John: "I beg you to send by the bearer of this, the little hackney given me by the Admiral, in case he is in good condition. Send me also two pairs of trunk hose. Your tailor has one that Nuenar gave him to mend; the other pair please have taken from the things I recently used at Dillenburg, which are on the table with my accoutrements. If the little hackney is out of condition, please send me the gray drudge with the cropped ears. . . . Pray forgive me for troubling you with my affairs. I hope to repay you some time.") He was a social man and a lavish host, he loved dancing, masquerades, courtly entertainments, hawking and hunting and knightly tournaments, he was gracious without loftiness, he spoke candidly and unaffectedly with everyone he met whether at court or in the streets. Once, during William's last years, the English poet-diplomat Fulke Greville came upon him ("Vader Willem": already Father of His Country and much more than any other a parlor-and-kitchen paterfamilias) sitting among

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the citizens of Delft, "so fellow-like encompassed with them as—had I not known his face—no exterior sign of degree, or reservedness, could have discovered the inequality of his worth or estate from that multitude. Notwithstanding I no sooner came to his presence, but it pleased him to take knowledge of me. And even upon that—as if it had been a signal to make a change—his respect of a stranger instantly begot respect to himself in all about him: an outward passage of inward greatness which, in a popular estate [i.e. a democratic country], I thought worth the observing. Because there, no pedigree but worth could possibly make a man prince, and no prince, in a moment, at his own pleasure." According to Pontus Payen, a contemporary of William's, a loyalist historian hostile to him, "He is the most courteous and most agreeable man alive; he has made himself beloved of the people by his humility and liberality, and by his eloquence and vivacity has made himself admired by the highest; in brief it seems that God has endowed him with all the gifts of nature one can wish for to gain the hearts of men." Pontus noted that even the Catholic clergy—from prelates to priests—of the Netherlands, his lifelong opponents, "bore him a very good affection, especially those who had some intimacy or talk with him at the States-General; and had nothing in their mouths but his modesty, his courtesy, his generosity, so unlike the haughtiness, pride, and ambition of the other lords of the country." And Pontus also noted, disapprovingly, that "It was his custom to say that in matters of religion God alone should inflict punishment."

He may well have been the first man in the history of Europe, perhaps in the history of the world, who advocated complete freedom of conscience, not only for himself but for everybody else; and he never stopped advocating and trying to legislate it through every political vicissitude till his death, often against the harsh and distrustful opposition of his own associates (indeed of his own brother John) in the struggle against Philip, often at mortal risk to what he always considered the first order of business—the restoration of political autonomy and representative government in the Netherlands (so much for his "slyness" and "opportunism"). "In the clash of . . . competing bigotries [as Frederic Harrison summarizes these efforts in *William the Silent*] William of Orange strove to enforce mutual toleration by stirring appeals, by indignant rebuke, and by vigorous action. Time after time he drew up and obtained assent to a scheme of religious compromise or peace, on the basis of

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each party being free to exercise their own worship, subject to conditions to secure public order, and to avoid offence to their opponents. Both Catholic and Reformed communions were to have equal liberty, where either were in sufficient numbers to form a congregation, and were to have separate churches asigned to them. The rites, ornaments, and property of all religious bodies were to be held free from interference, attack, or insult by word or deed. Open-air and tumultuous preaching was forbidden, and everything which could invite strife or wound the conscience of believers in any creed. William now extended this toleration even to Anabaptists, by which his own chief agent was much scandalised. . . . In his zeal for real and complete toleration of creed William of Orange was in advance of his age by many centuries. And in this he stood absolutely alone." Because, as it's necessary to recall, the Calvinists wanted freedom of conscience for themselves and so did the Lutherans and so too, wherever they were in the minority, did the Catholics but none of them wanted it for anybody else even in the same sect if he differed on what could be interpreted as a point of doctrine. In matters of religion, said William, God alone should inflict punishment. He had been born into a Lutheran family, he was raised (at Charles's Court) a Catholic, he returned to Lutheranism while in exile, he became ultimately a very gentle Calvinist ("calvus et calvinista"—bald and Calvinist—as he liked to joke, balancing a loss and a gain of his middle age); and there is evidence in his letters, not to mention his moral nature, that the two changes when he was a grown man were heartfelt, made after serious self-instruction and consultation, and of no political usefulness. His enemies called him a cynic and a weathervane, ready to veer into whatever wind promised advantage, and no doubt they said so because if an attitude like his were to take over they would soon find their fun and games—murdering men, women, and children in the name of God—spoiled or, God forbid, prohibited forever.

He was multifarious and flexible in all things except conscience, so that he could puzzle his friends by maintaining at the same time and in fact for a lifetime positions that seemed wildly contradictory. For instance, he supported both legitimacy—the continuity of tradition, human relations, lordly responsibility, the community of Europe that under Charles the Empire had stood for—and representative government: a double commitment that caused him to cling for many years to the absurd fiction, as others re-

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garded it, of contending against Philip in the name of Philip. He would gladly have consented to the sort of dispensation that Charles in his best days had allowed more than the appearance of—a republic under the benign supervision of the Imperial Crown. When Philip's unsuitability as the emblem of what Philip was so wholeheartedly trying to smash became at length clear enough, William to the mystification of his partisans refused to surrender his hope of turning up an alternative, steadfastly refused to accept the sovereignty for himself (he was not a "legitimate" candidate), expended substance and energy over many years on candidates whose incapacity (which often he himself felt obliged to acknowledge) mattered less to him than their pretensions to European legitimacy as well of course as the pledge they might bring of assistance from outside—Queen Elizabeth of England; relatives of the reigning Emperor; the despicable Duke of Anjou, French and Catholic, who later had to be driven out of the country after attempting a *coup d'état*, but who when England and Germany had been unresponsive seemed to William the only remaining hope, as a few months before his death he wrote to his brother John:

> Your theologians and others say that this is contrary to the will of God, but mark well—the minority only is Protestant in the Netherlands, and among the minority the greater part, although strong in their zeal against Anjou and the Catholics, are, when it comes to action, weak and uncertain, as has been repeatedly proven. Moreover, there is no evangel to prevent obedience to a prince of a different creed, or to an alliance with one. The histories of the patriarchs, of David and of Solomon, of the Swiss and Poles, of the German princes in the days of Maurice of Saxony, were all proofs of this. Freedom of religious service could always be guaranteed. And still you write me that there are those who are presumptuous enough to accuse my conscience and my honor, which I would find very strange if I did not recognize the ingratitude inherent in men and the unbridled desire to speak ill.
>
> Who in this world is sufficiently courageous to touch another's conscience? And as regards honor—I can say to a brother without hesitation, is there anyone who has worked more, suffered more, lost more in order to establish, aid, and maintain the church than I? Let them who criticize me do more and better than I. I will serve them and, so far as I can, honor them. Continue, brother, to aid me with your advice for the defense of the good cause wherein, God giving me grace, I am determined to end my days and never to come to an accommodation with Spain, knowing that with such would come the ruin of the churches, of the country, and of many people, a general tyranny over all inhabitants of this land and particularly [because John, the homebody and conservative of the Nassau family, was always moved by this irrefutable argument] the destruction of our whole house.

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And he reassured John that he would continue to do his utmost to defend country, religion, and freedom, "hoping that God by some means will not abandon me in a quarrel so just and so necessary, for which I implore him from the bottom of my heart."

He was a legitimist and a monarchist, he was also unbending on the right of states to govern themselves, also unbending on the principle of representative government, also something like the first democrat in the history of Europe. During the last decade of the many years he spent conducting the defense against Philip, he was de facto king, president, prime minister, chief justice, commander-in-chief; yet in accordance with his stipulations all issues were discussed openly and often acrimoniously in the representative body the States-General, who made all the binding decisions, could and on occasion did overrule him, had the authority to dismiss him and made clear that given the right conditions they wouldn't hesitate to use it. When he was considering new policies and actions it was his custom to travel around the country discussing and arguing them with people of every rank in the cities and villages. Meanwhile he was fighting a war of survival against the most formidable political and military power in the history of Europe.

Nor did he have the usual primary qualification of the successful rebel: though he was a brave and intelligent soldier, he was not a great or at any rate lucky military leader. A year after Alba's occupation of the country, William mustered a mixed army of Netherlanders and German mercenaries with what money he had remaining of his own and all he could beg and borrow from adherents inside the Netherlands and fellow-exiles, crossed the border, and tried to force an engagement with Alba, who however was too skillful a soldier to be drawn in; and after a few months William's army, out of money and provisions, was falling apart and retreating to the French border:

> And so at last [according to C. V. Wedgwood's biography of William], "tired and worn out and half dead with hunger" they reached France, William himself having tasted neither bread nor wine for nine days. But his troubles were not over; indeed barely begun, for the French government indignantly ordered him to take his troops away and he struggled back at length in the New Year of 1569 to an inhospitable Strasbourg. He was so ill by this time that he could no longer ride, and his haggard and desperate condition provoked pity in all who met him, except his mercenary captains who stormed his lodging at Strasbourg threatening to make an end of him if he would not meet their wages.

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> Abandoning all hope of retaining his troops, he sold what remained of the artillery to pay the men, left his plate, tapestries, and household stuffs in pawn to the merchants of Strasbourg and escaped one dark night down the Rhine, traveling in a covered barge, almost alone.
>
> The disaster was total. He had thrown in all the resources he had, his entire fortune, the gifts and loans of a trusting and faithful people, and he had lost everything, money, men, credit, and reputation. "We may regard the Prince of Orange as a dead man," wrote Alba with satisfaction.

William thought differently however; as he wrote to John (Schiller himself couldn't have imagined it better, and William didn't have the benefit of a poet's hindsight), "With God's help, I shall go on."

It was at this time that his second wife, Anne of Saxony, was multiplying his public miseries by all the private ones she could inflict. She had been a fault-finding and difficult woman from the first—early in their marriage, before William's exile, Cardinal Granvelle characterized her as "the Prince's Xantippe"—but during the exile she appears to have done everything in her power to embarrass and humiliate him personally and even if possible destroy him politically: she told visitors she had always warned William against getting embroiled with the Spaniards and now that he was she had no sympathy for him, she demanded he abase himself before Alba and return to the Netherlands, she wrote to Philip pleading for the reversion to her of all of William's property because by his failure to return at the King's summons he was legally a dead man; asserted she couldn't abide William's not royal enough family (she was, after all, a German princess, daughter of the renowned Maurice of Saxony), eventually while William was away betook herself to Cologne to set up an independent household there because there she had people to talk to and wasn't stuck out in the boondocks with her husband's family, nor would she come back at his request: "Do you not see, my wife, that you who are my spouse leave me to find consolation in trouble from others who are not so near me?" In Cologne she became involved in a liaison with a lawyer named Rubens (father of the painter), who told all to William, but at first Anne denied all: "If you fell into the hands of the Duke of Alba, which God forbid, you too would confess that white was black. So he cannot be too severely blamed for what he said nor should my honor be suspected from it, for usually unfair questions receive false answers, as has just happened to you." Soon afterward, however, she wrote to John asking him to

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forgive her and to use his good offices with William in her behalf; but, though she came back to William's family, her mind and spirits kept deteriorating, she grew so violent that her maids were in danger of their lives, and at last she was returned to her family in Germany, where a few years later she died insane.

Meanwhile William had met another woman whom he wished to marry. She was Charlotte de Bourbon, daughter of the French Duke of Montpensier. Almost from birth she was raised at a convent by her aunt the Abbess there, whom by the quaint highborn-Catholic custom of disposing of spare daughters she was intended to succeed; and at the age of twelve, despite her formal declaration that "she was about to take her vows under compulsion, against her will, and at the command of her parents whom she feared to disobey," her aunt having died Charlotte took the veil and became Abbess of Jouarre. For years she kept making plans to escape, and at the age of twenty-five carried them out by managing to reach Germany, where she was given refuge by the Count Palatine of the Rhine. William met her, and soon proposed marriage ("She must bear in mind," he advised an intermediary, "that we are in the midst of a war whose issue is uncertain, and that I am deep in debt for this cause, to princes and other gentlemen, captains, and men-at-arms. She must remember, too, that I am beginning to grow old, being forty-two years of age"); but the problem was that Anne, though out of her mind, was still alive in Germany. William requested opinions from a number of Calvinist clergymen in France and the Netherlands, all of whom agreed that Anne's behavior had released him from his conjugal ties and that he was therefore free to marry. Of course the episode was a scandal throughout Europe, political repercussions were anticipated even to the breaking of connections with friendly neighbors (the Landgrave of Hesse: "for his circumstances he ought rather to wish, if he were in his senses, that he had neither wife nor child. . . . If it's beauty he's after, you can hardly believe he was charmed by that, since no one can look at the bride without being frightened rather than pleased"), and solemn John expressed his shocked and anxious remonstrances, which William put an end to with some plain speaking:

> my method has always been . . . not to trouble myself about objections to anything I could conscientiously do without wrong to my neighbors. If I had heeded the remonstrances of princes and others, would I ever have embarked on the enterprise I have undertaken? As soon as I was

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convinced that neither prayers nor exhortations would have any effect, I saw that active resistance was the sole course open.

It is the same thing now with my marriage. It is something I do with a clear conscience before God and without just cause for reproach from men. Indeed I consider that I am bound to this procedure by God's holy ordinance and that there is really no need to answer men, because the matter is so clear. . . . There is nothing that checks evil suspicions so quickly or that is in such good taste as a quiet and rapid mode of procedure, as though one's self were the most competent judge of one's own behavior, rather than to blazon matters abroad with the sound of the trumpet and then to invite criticism from those who must necessarily be only partially informed as to details.

In regard to the difficulties you raise, of dowry and of provision for children who may be born to me, pray consider that no delay till the next Diet [the Imperial Congress], or the next century, so to say, would have solved them. . . . I have made a frank statement about my duties to my older children . . . and there was no further reason for my being longer in the state of widowerhood to which I have been condemned for so long. . . . I firmly believe that I have taken the right course, not only for myself, but for the public weal.

Charlotte was a loving, affectionate, protective, devoted wife during the seven years they had together (even John was won over, saying that his brother had found in her "a wife distinguished by her virtue, her piety, her great intelligence, in sum as perfect as he could desire her"): she died a few weeks after the first assassination attempt on William, having worn herself out in those weeks of constant attendance on her apparently dying husband. On March 18, 1582 William had been shot through the face by a young man named Jean Jaureguy, hired by a Spanish merchant living in Antwerp who wanted Philip's bounty money. One of the witnesses was an English envoy, who sent this account to Lord Burghley:

suddenly a person of small stature and less representation (of the age of three or four and twenty years, ill clad, and of face pale, drawing to a black melancholick colour, shaven, saving the upper lip, whence a thin black hair began to issue) presented himself as though he had some request to exhibit and once being put back by a halberder, still persisted and suddenly discharged a pistol (that he held unseen) at the Prince, which by reason of overcharging recoiled in his hand and made the piece and bullet to mount upwards from his level, taking the Prince between the ear and the end of the jaw of the right side, passing clean through the left cheek, without offence to the arterye, the jaw, tongue, or tooth (as yet hitherunter is said) saving that it grated upon one tooth, whereat the Prince neither staggering, nor astonyed, beheld the fellow, till he, amazed with his own fact, and bound as it were to the

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> place with a divine power, let his dagger fall to have made away, whereat one Bonnyvet stabbed him in the breast, and then he was presently slain in furie by the company much against the Prince's will, who cried still to save him, but in vain, for he had in less than a moment no less than thirty-three mortal wounds given him.

William had said, as soon as he caught his breath, "Do not kill him. I forgive him my death"; but the revenge had already been taken. For weeks William was thought to be past help, but when Jaureguy's accomplices were put on trial he was able to send a note saying that he believed they should be pardoned, but that if the decision were otherwise "I beg you to ask the magistrates not to inflict torture," and at least his latter wish was honored. He had no need for revenge; he is the only person of the time to be on record against torture as an instrument of justice; and his moral superiority, even at the brink of death, begins to be insufferable. He recovered, however, and continued his work for the two years left to him. On July 10, 1584 he was shot to death in his home by Balthasar Gérard, a young Frenchman who before he undertook the deed had consulted with a Jesuit, a Grey Friar, and Philip's latest Regent the Duke of Parma, and who had bought the pistol with money William had given him in charity. He fired three shots at pointblank range into William's body; William said, "My God, have pity on my soul, I am grievously wounded; my God, have pity on this poor people!" and fell. He was fifty-one years old. His last word, in answer to his sister's question as she knelt beside him, "Do you commend your soul to Jesus Christ?" was "Yes."

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DANIEL HOFFMAN

From *Brotherly Love*

30

Whose is the kingdom, what the glory?
It is not easy, being son

To the hero of the English nation.
One thing is sure: You'll never go to sea.

Your father is master of this world
Where men twist their blades for power;

His admiral's flag commands how many bloodied tides
Where the dead sway in the streaked water.

Christ has banished Mars. Yet you are torn
Between your father and the Son.

Your soul delights in clarity,
In oneness.

The cost of the care of the soul is this,
You must withdraw rejoicing from the wind
Arriving to caress you from a place
Horizons hide, tousling the meadows, leaving
Unannounced for some still sierra
Where it may bring rains; you must forsake
The clearing after, and the glisten on
Each leaf and stem, the yarrow nodding in its
Dewy mantle, the blossoms in a woven
Elegance of white with lacey leaves

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Still intricately clutching beads of rain;
Withdraw your pleasure from the clouds convening
On the ridges of the hill, nor mind
Their annunciation of the tournament
Of colors of the evening when the caucus
Of white-throat's whistles, blackbird's juicy chirrs
And the choughs' rude scoffs are hushed, all hushed
But for the far-off pealing of reclusive
Nightingale—to none of which you listen,
Giving your awareness only
To the soul;

Life springs so abundantly in you,
In the thick foliage of your own vigor you are lost

In confusion: whether
To let your beloved father espallier

Your spirit in those shapes that should adorn
The mannered gardens of a loose-lived King

Or to lop off and prune, yourself, all that excrescent wildness
So that your soul,

Reaching in purer air than father breathes,
So high above the earth its branches

Splashed by the sun's brimming ewer of light
Will, when that goes out, shine on with light

More pure, more bright than nature's source
Or any seen by natural sight—

Still, would you not enjoy and flourish
Under the preferments father schemes to grant you?

But your soul spurns the dusty bones of the world's dead hours.
It's the cool waters of eternity you long for.

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The plaints, and worse, the urges of your body
You must put down.
You must not think of women and their bodies,
The breasts that bulge above their bodices,
The mysterious aggravation that their voices
Rallying and falling like birdsong in summer rain
Bestir in your tumultuous heart. You must
Not think
Of how beneath the giddying ringlets of her hair,
Head cocked, eyes laughing, she is poised
To wreak
Invisible stabs, a burning in the blood and breath
Caught as in a noose the heart is caught
For the cost
Of the care of the soul is this:

O if you could but banish your own body, leaving
Only your spirit to inhale

Pure light.
Your sorrowful

Cries afflict the Lord,
Your knees have worn grooves in the floorboards.

Within yourself the bolt slides
On the dark gaol

Where the woman you would touch betrays
Your soul, your soul.

How endure
Knowledge of your own desire?

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Purity, cries the voice within, *Purity!*
But the Church is of this world, corrupt with its corruptness.

Charity, Charity, pleads your inward tongue
But the Puritans to all not Puritans wield

The hard stave of their unforgiveness.
'Seeing as yet no such thing,' your pen scrawls,

'As the primitive spirit, the true church on earth,
And being ready to faint concerning

My hope
For the restitution of all things,

After this the Glory
Of the World overtook me,

I was even ready
To give myself up to it—'

31

INSTRUCTIONS TO A PAINTER OF PORTRAITS IN DUBLIN, 1666.

Not the Seeker or the Swain
The likeness that your Art should feign,
    Nor Scholar's abstract gaze
    Who gropes in learning's maze;

But paint the purposed brow of one
Who sternest Duty did not shun,

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Whose twenty-second year
Was proof against all fear,

As, worthy of his Father's fame,
At Carrickfergus made a name
With the Vice-Regal court,
Storming the rebels' fort.

Though he would grasp Ormonde's reward
And lead the Kinsale troop of guard,
His Father, wordlier far,
Forbids he hide his star.

No great career will soon be made
In that provincial pallisade;
His light let shine among
The well-born and the strong.

Who knows how high his son may rise
In the Duke's favor, the King's eyes?
Show, then, the eager lip
That's savored its first sip

From glory's goblet; at the throat
Let fall a flowing, fringed jabot
To soften the severe
Cast of cavalier

In iron corselet, but suppress
The look of inward pensiveness
That clouds his unlined face
And would all pride displace.

Your subject will attend the throne
And make this treacherous world his own,
Mastering those arts
That fit a man of parts:

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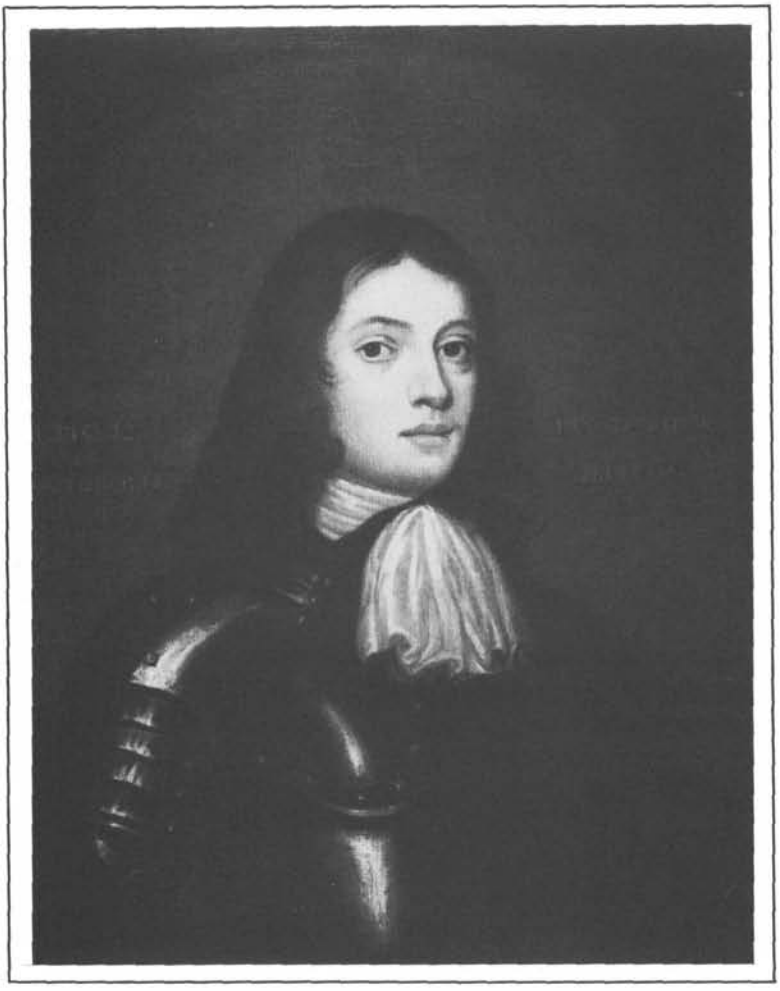
32



William Penn in armor, artist unknown, courtesy of The Historical Society of Pennsylvania

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33

From posing in Dublin, pleased with his own likeness he returns to the accounts, the rents, the litigious papers—
It's on his father's business he comes to Cork,
and a button's missing on his sleeve as when he came here once with mother
and there's the shop where she had taken him,
shop of a Quaker woman, buttons, bolts of cloth, shirts, coats, stockings, pins,
—Strange she finds it, strange indeed, that he so familiarly should speak
—this fancy gentleman she'd never seen—of what she'd sold and said
ten years before, until 'You surely do recall
my father, Sir William Penn of Castle Macroom?' and then
she laughs aloud to think of the shy, hangback lad peeping behind
his jovial mother, him now grown up so manly, handsome,
so much a man of the world, she says,

while sewing on his button. Is it remembering, or something in himself today
recalls the Publisher of Truth his father asked to preach
once, at Macroom—he'd judge, himself, what roused the countryside
to such a passion—this sectary who held the Seed of Light
is in us by God's Will, no priests being needed by the soul
to interpose their altar, surplice, wafer, chants, or prayers
between a Christian and his God.
'It's many a mile I'd walk to hear again
the tongue of Thomas Loe,' says Penn, 'who made
my father's servant, Black Anthony from Jamaica, weep,
and my father wept, and I too,
on hearing him, shed tears.'

'Thee need not go so far if thee will stop
this night in Cork, for here Friend Thomas

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waits upon the Lord tomorrow.' His father's business stretches
with tedium the interminable hours, a strange
expectancy within him whirring
like a single swallow in an empty barn.
Sleepless night in Crown & Garter,
belfry throbbing with his apprehension
of the coming of a Word . . . the sky
pales, then blushes. Cart-creaks on cobbles
echo from drowsy walls. He must
stride out past shops and houses, beyond
the cottages, the farms, to walk awhile
alone,
no one, no thing,
no thought

between him and the brightening clouds.
So on this hill of furze and heather, grey rock
and scattered flock of browsing sheep
in the vastness of the dewy air the mist swirls,
the sweetly mocking bell-song of the hours' chimes brought
brokenly by winds across the heath from
distant spires. Time,
time of this world. Disconsolate longing
floods him near to tears. He
turns, trudges to house of Friends.
Low-ceilinged room.
In bright-buckled shoes and velvet breeches,
shining scabbard and wide hat with plumes
he sits, a gamecock among silent chats and wrens,
and looks about for Thomas Loe. No pulpit,
all sit side by side. There, on the bench
among the rest, in silence.
Stillness spreads until it all but bursts with promise while
the humming world is still,
still, and they are famished
for a word
which they unspeakingly await—

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34

Silence, more
eloquent than
speech: the un-
spoken word
wiser than our

earnest trials
to say, to find
in the mind's hoard
praise that reveals
perfections known

and not diminished
in the telling—
in the silences
between speech and halt
speech, beseech

a gift of tongues
that words bear
witness, true
to what we hear
chiefly in silence

before and after
speech now, as
these letters
whiten the space
surrounding them.

35

'Open Thou my lips,' the Prophet said, 'and then
My mouth shall praise the Lord.' But not till then.

The Preparation of the Heart is of the Lord.
The Answer of the Tongue is of the Lord.

Since God is Spirit, the Divine in us
Uses a dialect whose dictates we hear

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As He heeds us, Who needs no speech to hear.
What forms of ours are adequate to God?

There is a faith the world overcomes,
And there is faith that overcomes the world.

—That is the text!—the rest, elaboration.
No one set down the tropes of Thomas Loe,

No other word of his that spelled His Word
On which Penn's life henceforth is commentary.

A coal from God's Altar must kindle us,
No sacrifice acceptable without True Fire.

37

He lies in the nave of darkness where the night
Holds its black breath and the blood pounds
Behind his eyes in streaks of red heat lightning

And his body makes known the individual fatigues
Of the foot, of the back, of the shoulder, the brain
Which interrupted sleep has not assuaged

And without thinking, thoughts as effortless
As breath press on him while his mouth fills
With exhalations from the mouth of the darkness

—Down a littered street all doors are barred,
Crosses chalked on walls, and nothing moves
But ragbone horse straining at laden hearse

While ravens perch on rooftree and the evening
Cringes, pierced by mortal moans, the shrieks
Of the new widow, the dying and the doomed:

It is himself he sees watching the scene
Yet he is in it, is carried from the house
And thrown by hooded bearers on the waggon,

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And now the death-cart turns at palace gate,
It is an open carriage in the courtyard
With him in armor in it, and his sword,

Descending, plumes sweeping the ground, he bows,
Obedient servant, low before Milord
By rote, though rotes of pomp and man's debasement

Weigh on his heart with grief, with Sabbath grief
For the lost simplicity of true behaving
Where all's dissembling—at the window, glare

Of flames that creep up gables, race down thatch
Then comb the roofs and leap the narrow streets
As flaking showers of sparks pelt down on wharves,

Ships, bales, taverns, shops all crackling
And where were houses, stand black skeletons;
Within, flames dance their avenging dance

As the blistering sky roars with the world's death-pain.
Then glare dissolves and he lies in the dark
In the moment without movement, the awaiting

Acceptance of the unavoidable:
Out of that cold shuddering blackness where
The aching mind is blind and feelings freeze.

Where only the terror of confusion is possible,
Confusion and the terror of the nothingness
The world is that knows no love—

With a rush beyond the mind's grasp
(The world is death and ashes without love)
He feels his body quake as though a Hand

Grasps his neckbone,
holds him
to the Light:

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38

As William Penn am I
In this life till I die.
In this life, what is real,
The body, or the soul?
My father whom I love
Is not my Father above;
His soldier's, courtier's strife
Not my life, or the Life:
This flesh which he begot,
These senses that I feel,
These appetites, are not
The Holy Seed in me,
But as a wooden bowl
Holds water pure and fresh
Dropped from crystal cloud,
Its clarity the same
As when from Heaven it came,
Until I wear a shroud
This vessel of my flesh
Is the chalice of my soul.

39

Takes on the habit now
of this Society, among them finds
true fellowship and love unfeigning.
Avoids all signs of worldly rank,
all men his equals in God's sight.
Refuses, as Christ bids, to swear.
For a Christian's YEA is YEA, his NAY is NAY,
to require oath of him
reproaches his sincerity of faith.
And for not swearing oaths are the Friends cast into prison.

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Of this peculiar people's testimony
another is, not fighting
but suffering, since they affirm
all wars and fightings come of the lusts
of men's own hearts, not
the spirit of Christ Jesus.
And for this the King and his minions
who wage wars to enlarge his dominions
cast the Friends into prison.

His testimony to peace gives Penn concern.
What is George Fox's counsel?
He'd be as true as any, but wears his sword
and this, among the Friends, seems vain,
a provocation. Yet the sword
has saved his life: when, on a street in Paris
a drunken gentleman for some supposed slight
drew on him, with that blade
Penn, good swordsman, disarmed the man
and spared his life
who would have taken his for nothing.

Now Fox looks sideways at this Gentleman Commoner
so lately to his doctrines won,
still in buckled shoes, a courtier's hat,
a sword,
and says,

'I advise thee to wear it as long as thou canst.'

'Where is thy sword, Friend William?' Fox inquires
on their meeting soon again. 'Oh,' says Penn,
'I have taken thy advice,'
—armed henceforth
in the manner of the Friends
against the powers and dominions of this world:

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BARBARA KERR DAVIS

Declaration of Dependence

I. Awakening

Out of a dream of floating and turning smoothly within a space of warmth and muffled sound and semi-darkness, she awakens suddenly and feels the vibrations of sound rising up out of her own startled body, a sharp cry that has origins she is not aware of. As her eyes begin to focus, she sees again the light that has become part of her new world, and there, near her head, she recognizes now the bright pink and blue and yellow shapes which have already taken on meaning: here is a familiar place.

She calms herself and gazes intently, studying the shapes from her helpless position. Her arms and legs are still filled with the movement of the dream, of turning and kicking, moving freely in the warm, enclosing place. They move now, pushing against the hard surface which presses up against her body and her face. One arm is held close to her side as the other one flails the air and pushes again and again against the surface beneath her. The world begins to change; the pink and blue and yellow shapes seem to dance as she kicks her foot and presses with her arm and sets her body rocking. Almost exhausted with effort, she feels one more burst of energy spreading through her, urging her body to the movements of the dream. One final kick brings her over, the world spinning above her head, her legs and arms free once again to stretch and move and search the space around her. It is her first step out of utter helplessness.

A voice, a face, also familiar now, perhaps a part of her—she is not sure yet—is there just above her. The words have no meaning, but the soft, high tones stir her to a renewed awareness of the grumblings of her insides and of unspoken memories of gratification. But the voice modulates now and sounds quite different than ever before, excited, the multitude of words are spoken in higher, faster tones. The face is smiling as the warm hands reach down to pick her up. She has no words to remember the moment with, but her whole body feels and will remember forever the significance of her accomplishment.

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II. Tying Shoes

Sitting alone on the living room rug in the dim light of early morning, she is surrounded by vast, padded shapes and shiny surfaces (which smell still of the creamy polish she watched her mother wipe on yesterday). The venetian blinds at the long, wide windows are still closed; it almost feels like night time instead of morning. But she can see the rays of bright yellow electric light pouring out of the kitchen doorway into the dining room, and she can hear the glassy clatter of cereal bowls and coffee cups on saucers, the tinny jangle of spoons and forks, the ruffling of her father's newspaper, and the intrusive whirr of the machine on which her mother is pressing orange halves to make juice. This sound makes her think not of the sweet, cool juice that drops into the glass below, but of the round silver strainer on top which catches all the pits and the bits of the fruit which she doesn't like to feel in her mouth when she drinks. She hears her brother choosing his cereal. He likes shredded wheat (which she also doesn't like the feel of in her mouth) and he is big enough to go to school. She must stay at home yet with her mother. She is aware of all of these things going on in the kitchen as she sits alone in the middle of the rug in semi-darkness even while she is concentrating on tying the laces on her own red shoes.

The first part is easy, just cross the ends, tuck one under and pull them both. This tightens up the top of the shoes; she knows she is doing it correctly and smiles. But the next part is not easy at all, making the loop and trying to discover where it is that the second loop is to be pulled out. The process has been demonstrated for her many times, sometimes patiently, sometimes in tense, exasperated tones. She does not want to see it done again or to have it explained again to her. She sits away from them all. The small fingers hold the loop, the other hand brings the end around. That looks right. She tucks the end under blindly, hoping it will be the right place, and pulls. A knot. They must not see it; they will tell her again that it is only a knot. Her fingers work hard to undo it. Again she makes a loop, again she twists the other end around and pushes it under in another place. It falls apart and she must begin again at the first part. Her eyes are filling with the hot liquid which will spill down her face in the dim, quiet room in which everything is large and still, hiding her from them.

She blinks to clear the blur that is in front of her eyes and whispers to herself the formula she has heard so many times . . . "the

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rabbit runs around the tree . . . " She sees where the end must go this time, she knows before she finishes that she has succeeded, that she has mastered this task. The loops are pulled with assurance and she pauses only a moment to examine the bow before beginning the other shoe. Somewhere inside of her it feels like another bow is being tied, drawn taut, waiting expectantly for the approval which shall be bestowed and enjoyed. Then, out of the room of vague shapes and morning shadows she enters the well-lighted place, pleased with the sharp aroma of fresh orange juice and warm toast and bacon which is just beginning to sizzle and spatter in the pan. She looks now at them, all ready to begin their day's work: she instantly, instinctively decides not to announce her accomplishment. Their voices, their praise will take it away from her. She knows this not in her head where the words are, but in that place within her where the bow has been tied and smiled on in secrecy, aware of its own power. She sits on the white kitchen chair and swings her feet under the table, hiding the red shoes for a little while as she chooses her own cereal.

III. The Ballfield

Emerging out of the cool greenness of the summer wood in which she has walked in new, spotless white and blue sneakers along a wide and grassy path, she is aware immediately of the sun's warmth like warm water being poured down over her head, on to her shoulders and long angular body and down her slim browned legs. She removes the navy blue sweater which had felt so good as she had entered the leafy wood near her home and which had served as well as a protective covering from the finely spun webs and sticky, invisible strands which are strung across the path during the hours of dark and remain in early morning until the path is used. She folds the blue sweater across her arm remembering the thin slab of chocolate in its brown and white paper wrappings inside her pocket. She checks for it now as she looks out over the ballfield, at the bleachers which are filling with people, at the white lime lines that have been laid out for running lanes, at the sandbox where Mr. Saunders is raking the dampened sand smooth, at the official's table which holds a looseleaf notebook, a large cardboard box (first aid equipment, she reasons, and prize ribbons too, perhaps), a starting gun, and a large thermos jug of water.

The chocolate is still cool and hard in her sweater pocket; she will be careful to keep it in the shade until it is time for the morn-

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ing's field events, part of the township summer recreation program. It has been given to her by her mother just before she left the house, given to her with that same explanation (for "quick energy"; lettuce sprinkled with salt for endurance tests like tennis matches, but chocolate for that needed burst of energy in running and jumping) as if it were the first time that advice had been given. She didn't mind hearing it again; their secret, the thin rectangular shape of chocolate now nestled in her pocket, had become something of a ritual. Along with it came the often repeated exhortation to run past the finish line, to mark out a goal ahead of time, a point further than that string, so there would be no slacking of effort at the end of the race.

She walks across the expanse of grass and the dusty paths of the Little League baseball diamond toward the bleachers where she can see several of her friends grouped on the top of the sun-warmed boards. They wave and call out to her, excitement in their voices. Still she walks slowly, reveling in the liquid-like warmth of the sun on her bare arms and legs, anticipating the pleasure of winning the blue ribbons, of carrying them home. Yet here is something melancholy in this warm air, in the smell of the close-cut grass, the feel of the dust under her new sneakers. She will participate in the girls' eleven and twelve category this summer. She and her friends are now the eldest group. In the fall they will take the bus to the junior high school across town and they will forget to return to the ball field in the summer. Again she fingers the wrapper of the candy bar and reminds herself of the goal she must set for herself, beyond the finish line. Then she runs to join her friends in the bleachers.

IV. The cemetery

Her parents sit without speaking in the front, her father driving, her mother quietly contained and looking out through the monotonous motions of the windshield wipers. She sits huddled in the back seat no longer a child, yet feeling so much like one, trembling a bit yet from the cold April drizzle outside, an insinuating dampness that had reached even inside the solid stones of the church sanctuary and found its way into the corners, diminishing the small warmth of votive candles in red-tinted glass, dulling the blue and green figures of the stained glass window into sadness or only a resigned kind of peacefulness. Something inside of her has been pierced by this early April cold too. She refuses to analyze it as she

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tries to still her body and hands under the stiff folds of the borrowed slate gray trench coat which is at least two sizes too big for her. The drive to the cemetery is slow; she stares out the window looking defiantly into the faces of those who happen to be passing on the sidewalks, strangers in this dingy, gray city who turn curious expressions on the procession of solemn black cars. She sees an old woman who is struggling in a colorless, ragged coat and once white babushka to make her way down the sidewalk, dragging a two-wheeled wire cart with half-filled grocery bags in it. The old woman slows her already halting pace to peer in at the faces within each car in the procession.

As they drive past, she allows her eyes to meet those of the old woman, but she is instantly filled with shame, finding her own cold pain mirrored there in that lined, ashen face. At the cemetery she watches, still shivering, as her relatives climb out of their cars, put up their umbrellas and move like a great gray army toward the canopy over the grave. Her mother's mother, mother to nine children, grandmother to thirty-two and great-grandmother to thirty-six more, is today laid next to her husband of sixty-five years, the revered family patriarch who was nearly ninety when he was returned to the earth only three months earlier. Eight sisters and brothers, having flown in or driven in to their native New Jersey town from California and Ohio and Florida stand now amongst their own children and their children's children, watching the coffin as it is lowered into the thawing earth under the persistent needles of early spring rain. Do they think of their arguments, their bitter struggles to try to pass responsibility as nursing homes were mentioned during the past year? She too had tried to avoid all that, and even now pushes it from her mind, striving to retain an image of the gentle gray-haired woman as she used to gently scold her husband away from some one of the grandchildren who looked so wearily patient as the old man told one of the same stories again (of, perhaps, how he had been born in the same year as the arrival of the Statue of Liberty to the United States, or perhaps a tale of the old country, or of his work in customs on Ellis Island translating for the most recent group of refugees, of his two volume dictionary out of which he had taught himself English). She reflects now thinking that her grandmother seldom had any stories to tell, that any one of those gathered now at her grave (and now walking up one by one to place a flower on the coffin) knows so little of the person who had lived in that same brown house during those sixty-

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five years and who had conceived and birthed nine children within that house, and then watched as they left it, one by one, to go to homes of their own.

Only one time had she heard her grandmother actually tell a story. (The penetrating chill now shakes her very bones as she takes her turn at the side of the coffin to place a flower there.) Her grandmother had spoken almost matter-of-factly as her arthritic hands worked on one of her many colorful afghans. "I had had six of my children at the time, and times were hard. I had nursed each one and was still nursing my youngest, and I did sometimes either complain or talk with pride about being a mother of so large a family. My own mother had said to me, 'You think you are such a mother? You think you know what it is all about? You do not know until you have lost one.' " Grandmother did lose one, her little two-year old, her namesake child who was buried, to the childishly ignorant envy of her sisters, in a beautiful white ruffled dress and black patent leather shoes. None of the living had such finery.

She turned now away from the coffin, confused and angry as she had always been about that story, wanting now to look back, wanting to see the little girl in the white ruffled dress reaching down out of the chill gray mist, to lift the spirit of her mother up to warmth and light, to the care that she had so long provided until they did not need her any longer, only her husband, and then he too had left her.

She bent to pick up a small cousin who had fallen and was whimpering softly at her mother's side. As the small arms gratefully encircled her neck, she was overwhelmed with the thought that she, and the child she now held, and so many people standing there, had their origins in the body that now lay lifeless under a heap of bright little flowers.

She will return to the university tomorrow; her life will go on unchanged. But today she has changed, has after all received a gift from her grandmother in perceiving clearly, for one moment of time, her destiny in this mysteriously willful force of living and giving life.

V. The Glacier Cabin

For more than two hours, since just after the campfire breakfast of French toast and smoky coffee and sweet oranges, they have been hiking on this path with its gentle modulations through warm

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patches of sunshine where the great aspens and oaks do not grow so thickly and through more densely covered lengths of shade where ferns grow in lacy abundance beside the path. They walk briskly and almost always silently, each individually trying to merge consciousness into the idyllic hush of morning, trying to submerge the hectic pace of their lives, pausing momentarily and with only the fewest words to share with one another a jack-in-the-pulpit, a cluster of orange mushrooms, a striped chipmunk scurrying away with an acorn in its mouth. She walks behind him, sometimes looking down at the path, watching her own feet stepping rhythmically inside the wool socks and heavy hiking shoes as if they had a life of their own, quite apart from the quiet space of her mind that can direct her body to great exertion and yet remain detached, coolly observant. She often looks up, ahead of her, at the back of her husband (the word still sounds strange, even after six months), amused to imagine a strong hemp rope tied between them, like true mountaineers, a silent bond, an intertwined, complicated pathway of communication from one body to the other. She allows her imagination to indulge in fantasy and squints to see an aura of brilliant blue, of bold strength, emanating from this man who grows less a stranger of the world every day. She censors the image almost immediately, however, only vaguely sensing the wish to be pulled into the aura, to be subsumed by it, dependent within it. Logic and reason and fear pull her back to the reality of the green and yellow and silver shades of the landscape which surrounds their silent, earnest journey.

The trees are becoming more sparse and the switchbacks of the trail more steep. They walk for longer and longer stretches in sunlight that is filtered through tall, slender pines. On a great white and gray flecked granite boulder they rest, drink some still cool water out of the army surplus canteen and look out over the varied greens and the glittering blue water trying to pinpoint the location of their campsite on the north shore of the lake. After another hour, she is well aware of the fatigue that is building in her feet and legs and neck and shoulders, and she wonders again at her feeling of serene passivity even as her body is so active. They finally get a glimpse of the glacial snow toward which they have been climbing; despite the brilliant sunlight and their own intense physical exertion, they are beginning to feel chilled in the ice-cooled air. She is unexplainably giddy, elated, as they pause to pull on the knitted crewneck sweaters which they have carried in their

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packs. A small wood-carved sign, painted in the characteristic yellow and brown colors of all National Park property, indicates that the cabin (built over fifty years ago by a wealthy railroad man when there had been money in that business, as a vacation hideaway perhaps) is now only a half mile ahead. She had not thought she would care about reaching the cabin, but now it looms so large in her mind that it seems to take on a magnetism that draws them up the steep trails in the thin, cool air, with an ease, even with a surge of energy, that she could not have thought possible for her tired body.

She carries her dish of homemade turkey noodle soup from the cabin kitchen to a small wooden table under a window, near the great stone fireplace. The bowl that she sets down in front of her is a beautiful old and elegant piece of blue and white china. Its delicate blue flowers and fragile lines seem incongruous at first amidst the rustic textures of the cabin. She studies it for a moment before dipping her spoon into it, and feels again a strange elation, a silent jubilation that makes her blood surge and warm her face and all of her skin with a tingling, momentarily numbing sensation. She feels now the very rightness of this fragile, beautiful shape here in the wilderness. Behind them (and it will be ahead of them again too) is the lab with its calculations and exacting techniques, with its competition for awards and grants, with its mighty test tube accomplishments and its personal satisfactions and successes, all so overpoweringly important. All of that is lost now, for a few precious minutes, in the beauty of this old bowl, in the singing, zinging joy that she feels despite the muscle aches throughout her body. She looks across the table at her husband; he is smiling gently at her and reaches over to brush a streak of dirt from her face. They finish their meal of soup and buttered bread and hot tea in silence and then begin a slow, half-reluctant hike back down the mountain trail so they can reach their campsite before dark.

VI. Naked

She sits on the examining table trying to convince herself she is at ease though she feels naked and vulnerable under the two white sheets of crinkly paper. Waiting. She hears the doctor's voice in the next room, a kind and only slightly condescending tone as he talks to another patient. Only a few words can be heard clearly; she pictures the woman beyond the wall, perhaps the young woman she saw earlier in the waiting room, sitting on the table with the lovely,

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precious weight of a growing child inside of her. Near her time, perhaps. Is that the phrase people used? No, she thought about it, that would be in an old novel, close to her due date is what they would say. She tries to shut out the sound of voices by looking around the small space of the white-walled room for distraction. A small mirror on one side reveals the presence of an attractive thirtyish woman whose clear tanned face is framed by a softly curled cap of dark brown hair. She bites her lower lip, mocking the image of health and success, feeling strangely detached from the face that stares frankly back at her. Both pairs of eyes are suddenly averted.

On another wall, Picasso's mother and child in a silver aluminum frame look smug and self-satisfied, a world of two, inseparable. She tries to place herself inside the rounded shape of the mother but she cannot feel the bundled infant held against her heart, cradled in her arms. She tries to be the amorphous shape of the child, helpless, oblivious, totally dependent, but she cannot feel the warm cuddling arms around her nor the soothing warmth of the breast against her cheek. She shivers under her absurd paper covers.

The doctor's expert examination is accompanied by friendly diverting chatter. He congratulates her on the recently completed research project at the lab. He has even read her journal article; she is grateful for his interest and then for his casual, professional manner of saying he will talk to her and her husband in his office. They have had such talks before, with this doctor, with other doctors, at intervals over the years since their marriage, or since she had first stopped taking the pill. Nothing physically wrong, she could hear the words, could smell them burning into her flesh. Thermometers and graphs and pills and vitamins and the humiliating experience of artificial insemination. The psychiatrists, the yoga exercises and the hopeful vacations when they could relax and escape their too active existence always thinking, maybe this time.

Adoption. She hears the word coldly and avoids the eyes of her husband who also longs for comfort. Not someone else's. Her own, living and growing within her womb, to be dearly loved from the moment of birth, nay, from the moment of conception. Not impossible. Another phrase often repeated, but with a less promising tone each time. Her husband takes her hand, unembarrassed by the doctor's presence on the other side of the desk, trying to share, to merge their agonies and thereby lessen them.

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Outside, a warm spring wind brushes gently against them. He suggests a look at their backyard flower gardens where she has worked so many weekends. Even before unlatching the gate they catch the scent of fragrant blossoming hyacinths within a circle of yellow and purple crocuses. In a long, curving garden near the pond, tall, slender stalks swell with buds that will soon be bright yellow daffodils and rows and rows of red tulips. The large rhododendron bushes along the fence will soon be in blossom too, and she shows him where she will plant bright red and white impatiens in a section of shade near the old maple, and a long bed of white and pink petunia seedlings here in the sun near the house. They examine the new shoots on the evergreens which they planted together the first spring they had been here in this big old house. He is relieved to hear her talking about what she will do here in the garden, so silent had she been on the ride home from the doctor. With an enthusiasm quite out of character for him, he exclaims at the very promising sight of the hundreds of daffodils and suggests one other group of them on the edge of the side lawn. She is kneeling on the grass, tending the soil around the hyacinths, allowing the heavy scent to fill her senses. I will not plant any more bulbs, she tells him, I've quite given them up. He remains silent, helpless, standing on the lawn as she weeps into the bed of hyacinths at his feet.

VII. Finish Line

Oh, lost, in a nightmare of dense fog, of fine mist filaments assaulting her very being, her body now tightly curled trying to retain its last bit of warmth, helpless. She awakens with the single upward movement of eyelids still heavy from drugged sleep. Here are no engulfing, blinding needles of cold, but only white stillness, a hospital room—no, a rest home, they have told her. "Secluded, confidential, a restful haven for your loved one" . . . the disguising words come back to her now; she had read them on the tasteful, sophisticated brochure when she was first brought to this place—when? a month, two months ago? The eyelids want to fall shut again, to close out this whiteness, to search again for a place of meaninglessness. But her glance takes in a small basket of oranges on the table next to her bed, sharply jarring a tiny point of consciousness from a happier time. The bold contrast of color against the stark sameness of white in this room startles her. (And then she is seeing again the fascinating rush of red against the white enam-

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eled sink, frightening in its energy, billowing out under the water like thick crimson smoke. She had finally called out for help before losing consciousness.)

With a greater act of will than she has shown in many long weeks (for she had long refused to feed herself or even to get up to go to the bathroom on her own) she forces her eyelids to open fully, to fight the escape of drugged sleep in order to look at the fruit. She turns her head slightly and focuses on the dust motes in the slanted rays of afternoon sun which add strange illumination to the already uncannily bright oranges in their small woven basket. Ah, her husband had brought them; she is remembering now his faithful presence beside her at certain intervals—is it each Sunday? Yes, he had given her the oranges along with several candy bars which she sees now lying there near the basket of oranges; he had tried to entice her back to her self with these special gifts. Did he also weep? She seems to half remember that he did.

Her blue sweater is hanging on a chair near her bed; they had walked together in silence along the trails of the hospital grounds, up along the fence to the benches shaded by gangling eucalyptus trees, and looked out at the not too distant ocean, but she was unable to speak with him or even look into his eyes.

Rising unsteadily off the bed she walks over to a mirror hanging over the single bureau; she is shocked to see the thinness of the half-familiar face, the frail body and tangled hair. And surprised to see tears spilling down that dry image of a face. With a sense of still being only partially awake, she expends a great effort to put her arms into the sleeves of the sweater and draw it on over the shapeless garment she is wearing. Later, concentrating on each footstep, she walks up the grassy path along the fence (she knows she has followed others this way before—her husband, hospital attendants?) and smells the trees and the moist, recently cultivated garden soil—a kind of pungent odor, and the breeze is carrying sea smell all the way from the water which she now glimpses from the bench near the top of the hill.

She sits, cocoon-like, folding her arms against her body inside the large sweater. They will let her sit here a long while now, no one bothering her to move even if they should discover her absent from her room. Her interest is momentarily roused by a group of sailboats against the pale line of the horizon, tall, double-masted ships with white sails and colorful spinnakers rounding out in front of each one—striped pink, brilliant blue, or bright yellow; a race

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perhaps. Wanting to touch the bright shapes, she raises her arm and places her finger on them as if the scene before her were a painting. Her finger touches the emptiness of the air and she lets her hand drop again and places it in a deep sweater pocket.

Exhausted both from the physical effort of walking and from the strong inward pull towards withdrawal, she allows her eyes to close and enters into a dream of floating and turning smoothly in a warm, soft, enclosing place of semi-darkness and muffled sound, the distant sound of water surrounding, lulling, comforting. Then, her fingers move, quite by accident, slightly, within her pocket; her eyes open suddenly with new awareness as she recognizes, by touch, the shape of a chocolate bar in its wrapper there in her pocket. A slight smile moves across her face as she watches with great interest now, the boats sailing downwind making slow but steady progress, their bold spinnakers blown to taut fullness ahead of them, towards some arbitrary finish line in the great expanse of blue ocean.

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GREG KUZMA

Poems for My Brother

Face, yours.
Your beard thicker than mine.
A big mustache drooped over
and around your mouth.
Mine is a thin bristle.
Hair (where mine is thin, going)
full, curly, blacker than mine.
(Marie mussed it up in the coffin.)
Eyes "blue lightning" Dorcas Watters said
in a letter, noting your loss.
Wearing, however, the same shirts,
pants, the same sport coats—
my hand downs from
The Good Will days—the
same boots, almost (your feet bigger,
second toe ungainly long, like mine but
longer)—the feet tender as mine
as when we walked the gravel at
the pond edge just five months ago—
infant like or lightly sprained—
in toward the wooded camp to piss,
the hands yours—
fingers thinner, longer—so that
the guitar which though did not come easy
came, and you played (playing)
where I only dreamed,
the thumbs strong
broad—and showing nails
with the black blood clotted
(for you were one who
worked with his hands)
were what I took in my own

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as you lay there awkward
neck swollen, not looking yourself
in the box
and fondled—seeing the black smudge
there behind the glaze of the cleaned
nails—knowing you had been there.

This spring
the long walk in to Sergent Pond
you with the heavy pack
you with the canoe
sweat on both our foreheads
the trail lovely green and gold
the trees just coming with leaves
and the cold bright night
under the moon
with the loon calling
the owls calling
and you bringing them in

Near our smoky fire
and off to the left
a spider between two trees
standing as close as we together
had spun a gorgeous web
in the cold mid air
of May in the Adirondacks

continued to work as we watched.

Putting the web
between us and the moon
I squint my eyes down hard
to see it clear.
Jeff, a web like that
between us now
the moon shining

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life working to keep itself
the beautiful strands pulling
drifting lightly in the wind
the night not lifting.
Trust me not to tear away
my brother as I trust you.

Where will I find you next?
In the closet—
where the coat you seemed to want
I needed more
and kept

in the handshake I deliver
to the stranger
looking in his face for yours
finding it
feeling in my hand
gone out so quickly
yours—your love for anyone

getting up
from the table
wiping your mouth off
with my hand
your other hand's fingers
pulled through my hair
the way you did your own
when friend you lived

In your room
among its other heartaches
pictures of the two of us
its laughing matters
like the new fresh bottle

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of extra strength crab lice killer
(the joys of that itch)
I found the book of poems
I sent you years ago
as explanation of the woods
and something which I liked by someone else
unscratched, undirtied probably unread,
but put along with all the rest
of your possessions.
Forgive my wrong assumption at your taste.
And Barb in the closet
finding the vest she made you,
like new.

Your monuments a tent you never built,
a motorcycle reconstructed from the bottom up,
a few belts, a ring or two, some leather work,
saddlebags for Mark, hunting knives. You
lived with what you did, you used it up,
or gave it all away. Living as a kind of
ghost in your father's house
I watched you once eat an entire meal
standing at the sink
without dirtying a dish
a glass you used you took
from the drying rack still wet from another wash
drank from it lightly
and rinsed it back.
The same with the earth.
Scrubbed on your knees
the last of the fire's sparks
that blessed trip in May
and carried each bit of the garbage out
would even have rearranged
the stones
more naturally on the shore
where we dragged the canoe in
had it occurred to you
that we had marred them.

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The weather lately has been good for grief.
Wind, the sky dark,
mornings of hard rains
followed by muted afternoons.
And if the sun at all, then briefly
or from a painful distance.
Even to carry the barrels out
on a Sunday night
I've had to bundle up.
Four trips to the back alley
since your death,
one movie, two cases of beer,
bottle of gin,
there I can tell you all my events.

Dropped down on all fours then tried to put you up
kept standing you up and you giving off at the hip
one hand under you Marie with her arm holding your head
me rubbing the cold wrists rubbing rubbing
then you falling drooping over like a giant lily
and Mike all the time his face turned away turning away
not talking his big arm up over you lifting your face
towards the light Sue standing there now she has
fallen down now she is weeping now I am running
from room to room opening the windows, throwing
up the windows pulling the curtains back and Pete
works at the big black knot at your throat trying
to get some air there under the big lock up up
wide wide open the face, pound on the heart keep
pumping the life back in but you are not moving
but you are sliding out of our arms but you are
slime on our hands but you are dirt under our feet
and we keep jumping off the ground away from you
brushing pieces of you off our clothes a little
piece of your face in Mike's beard and he stares
at it wildly and you are dead you are dead dead
dead dead dead dead dead dead dead

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The world, though perhaps unawares, it is clear now
absorbed your terrible impact.
The birds scattered, the tin and
plastics of your death car
crumpled, rubber burned in your nostrils
if you could have smelled it, if you did.
And the birds returned in the swirling
lights of the ambulance. Strangers
took you off, strangers cut you
where your belly—bruised beyond
repair—lay plump and swollen
on your helpless hips. Strangers
announced your critical condition.
Then, when they could do no more
you were returned to us
to do the last things with.

First I fell to my knees
then I put my face to the floor
I let the phone go
somewhere in between
got down on my belly
squirmed, writhed
it was not pretty
still I was not low enough
last night my body
looking elsewhere for its last resorts
carried myself and you
up ten straight hills
on my bicycle
yelling all the time
like assault troops
making their last run in
until their legs fell off

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Afterwards, at the camp,
the leaves were very bright
and one morning, sitting around
the fire in the yard, we saw
the monarchs blowing through.
They and the leaves were the color.

It's over a month since your death.
What have I been doing?
I keep on coming to school.
Outside in the parking lot
my car stands innocent among the others
not revealing how it is it came to be here
how it is that he who drives it
does not know where he's going.
A simple trick
no more miraculous than your escape
in the midst of life.
Your total disappearance like my own
recurrent return
what we must live with now
like each day's weather.

There are faces all around me
so many, so many to admire, that are
lovely, so many I should like to kiss.
How kind you make me
who was never kind.

And the light, oh what did you do
to the light, did you pump it up

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did you wax it with your winter polish
why does it cut and glisten
everything.

And have you come to live inside me now.
Is it you I feel walking as I walk,
bursting as I burst to get free
tonight as I rushed from the building
into the last of the day.

Jeff remember in May we saw the
water lilies.
I finally have come to place on them
this meaning.
They were halfway risen toward
the surface.
Maybe a month's more warmth
would bring them up.
We looked, my friend,
at ourselves,
struggling to rise,
unfold at the water line
and lie in the sun in ecstasy.
Even while, all the time, our bodies
and our bones
skimmed over the water
in a silver boat
toward the dark shore.

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JAMES McCONKEY

Passages Early and Late

IN JUNE of one of my first years as a teacher, my wife and I and the drama teacher at my college and his wife made a day-long excursion from our eastern Kentucky town of Morehead to a state park. The children of both families had been left with friends. The spring term had just ended, and even Linda, the drama teacher's wife, was more relaxed than usual—she was normally the most intense and active of the four of us and was on medication for her high blood pressure. The day was cool and misty in the early morning, but bright and hot by noon: the kind of day in Kentucky in which meadowlarks sing in the hedgerows in the morning, wild roses bloom on the crumbling stone fences, and everything perceived between mid-morning and dusk is so sharply outlined that the viewer feels gifted with a strange power to look into the very essence of things—a bud, a thorn, a vulture on a rock, the rock itself.

We had brought food and cooking equipment for breakfast, but even hunger was pleasurable, something we didn't wish to satiate too quickly. And so we rented horses at the park stable as soon as it opened. We rode through the trails in the dark woods, trotting whenever we came to the sunny glades; and, in the green fields above the lake, we rode abreast, in a gallop. The smell and warmth of sweating horses, the sound that hooves and leather make, the feeling that from the waist down the rider has become one with the animal while the chest and head remain free and wholly human—these sensations, so sensuous and agreeable, are particularly exhilarating for one who is young and a reasonably good horseman.

At a picnic site we finally dismounted, leading the horses back and forth until they were cooled enough to be tethered to saplings at the edge of the clearing. Linda and my wife walked to the car for the breakfast supplies while I gathered brush and branches into a pile for P. C., the drama teacher, who had offered to build the fire. P. C. was tall and thin and had the pale complexion of people who haunt dark theaters and basement studios. On his knees, pa-

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tiently tending his small fire, he looked to me more an ascetic than an outdoorsman; but in his gentle voice he began reminiscing about his childhood in North Carolina, and about various experiences with bears and other wildlife in the Great Smokies. He spoke of moments of recklessness and danger. Once, as a boy, he had rescued a man whose car had plummeted from a cliff . . .

It was characteristic of P. C. in his intervals of happiness—after, say, an opening performance of *The Tempest* in which his student actors from Neon and Salt Lick had conjured up more magic than he had believed possible—to talk about himself, to mention certain of his childhood adventures and to speak of famous actors with whom he'd had a beer or two during a season of summer stock; but he always did so in such a soft and apologetic voice that anybody not familiar with him would think he was telling one little lie after another. It is the fact of P. C.'s happiness, his shy garrulousness, that I remember from this day. I cannot remember what he said about bears, or about how he had managed to rescue a motorist whose car might or might not have been cradled in the branches of a tree; if he described for me some action of his adolescence in which his sense of abandon had nearly cost him his life, I have only a faint recollection that probably this is so.

For, while I can remember from this day everything that gave me a personal pleasure—including such a tableau as P. C. kneeling before a fire while four horses watched him—I can recall almost nothing of what any of my companions said, and nothing whatsoever of what particularly pleased them. What did my wife say, and what gave her the most delight? Did she smile at me? Was she wearing the boots and breeches from her high school days? My memory, usually so reliable in regard to what has made her happy, tells me much too little about my wife and the couple who for six years were among our closest friends.

I most regret my inability to recollect Linda's responses. She had wanted to be an actress. In a way, she was an unpaid drama teacher at the college, for she helped P. C. coach the student performers, designed costumes, and once or twice a year—whenever a play had a role for a woman that required a maturity and emotional response beyond the experience and ability of the available students—acted in the productions. Restless, she needed always to be planning parties or arranging social events for charitable purposes. A month before we went to the park, I had returned to my graduate school in Iowa to take the final oral examination for my

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doctoral degree. On the night immediately preceding my departure, Linda, aware of my anxiety, gathered all the members of my department and their wives before our front door to sing "Your Ph.D., your Ph.D., you're going to get . . . your Ph.D.," to the tune of "Aloha." Some years after my wife and I had left eastern Kentucky for upstate New York, Linda suffered a stroke that deprived her of speech. P. C. gave up the theater for less demanding work so that he would have the time to teach her word after word of her lost language. Following another stroke, Linda died, "knowing at least, thank God, how to speak," as P. C. told my wife and me in a late night long distance call following her burial.

On that day at the park, the four of us—after breakfast and further riding—walked the nature trails, dived into the cold water of a blue lake surrounded by green hills, raced our companions to the dam and back in foot-driven paddleboats, lay in the sand in our wet swimming suits and later in the grass of the meadow above the lake, and explored in the heat of late afternoon a cool cave whose roof was furred with sleeping bats. All day I kept saying to myself, "How happy I am! How good I feel!" My body felt lean and capable of the most strenuous physical task; at rest it was loose-limbed, drowsy, sensual.

Toward evening, we started home. I was driving; my wife rested her head on my shoulder. Nobody spoke, for we were all tired; but when I saw an intriguing road—the narrow kind, with gravel or sand only in the single pair of tracks, that curves as it climbs a forested hill—I swerved off the blacktop to take it. Roads of this kind often appear in my most mysterious dreams; and if I actually come upon such a road and do not take it, thinking that I can't spare the time or that my desire to follow it is merely superstitious, I suffer the nostalgia we feel for something of large value that we have willfully lost. I took such a road on that day at least partly because I didn't want my personal happiness to end. Not only was the term over, but I had just been granted my doctoral degree. Regardless of the lateness of the hour, of the fact that the families who were caring for our children were expecting us to retrieve them before supper, none of the others protested when I left the highway; perhaps they slept, perhaps they were as unwilling as I to admit that our excursion was almost completed.

I drove past several abandoned cabins. Beyond them, the road dipped to ford a rocky creek and climbed again into further woods. The uphill tracks had been eroded by the rivulets of the preceding

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rainy season; dry and snake-like channels now, they held large stones against which the frame of the car occasionally scraped. My companions had become alert. "Hadn't we better turn back?" my wife asked. I said maybe we could, at the top of the hill. At the crest, though, facing a huge sun just beginning to descend behind a ridge that paralleled ours, we looked down into a green and level valley. A wide stream divided the fields; and beneath us, at the edge of the stream, stood a small, white-painted church. Here the road stopped; there was no bridge. One side of the steeple was illuminated in the soft glow. It was such an improbable destination for this rarely-traveled and wretchedly-maintained road that it reminded me at once of the end of such roads in my dreams; I wanted to see if the church truly existed, and, if so, if it really were as immaculate as it appeared to be from our height.

I remember no further ruts, no further rocky obstructions. By the side of the church, the road looped back upon itself like the terminus of a streetcar line. On the other bank of the stream, a somewhat wider and neatly-graveled road led to a parking lot. A barge—a simple ferry boat for passengers—was tied to the opposite shore; a cable fastened to trees on both banks and connected by a pulley and smaller cable to the boat obviously was intended to keep the worshipers from floating downstream during the flood season. How was the boat propelled? Did the worshipers sling a rope across the water to a solitary person who took our road for the purpose of pulling the others to his side? Were long poles hidden in the barge? While we marveled and built our theories, twilight came. There were no power lines in the valley—that was part of its charm—but such a lack meant no electricity in the church. Freshly-painted, it shimmered and grew larger in the vanishing light.

The door unlatched easily; it had been kept shut by a hasp with a whittled stick through the staple. The interior was not yet dark; the walls and ceiling were white and the many-paned windows large. The unvarnished floor had the bleached and sanded look that comes from countless scrubbings. Six rows of pews faced the pulpit. Next to the lectern stood a bulky black piano and a stool. No religious objects or pictures decorated the little room; no sign existed outside or within the building to denote a sect. But the hymnals in the racks and on the piano were those of my childhood—and apparently of the childhood of my companions too. Sitting on the stool, P. C. looked at the page to which the hymnal was opened and immediately began to play "I Walk in the Garden

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Alone" and then "The Old Rugged Cross" and "Come to the Church in the Wild Wood." Grouped around him, the rest of us, needing to see the words no more than he needed to see the musical notations, sang as if we had been invited into the church to do so; as if the purely physical and no doubt self-centered happiness we individually had experienced earlier that day had been an intentional and necessary preparation for this activity which otherwise was as isolated from everything in the past and from everything in the future as the church itself was isolated from our habitual world. The room slowly became one with the darkness gathering outside and each of the singers became only a face and a voice—a face almost indistinguishable from the other faces floating in the night, a voice merging with the melodic stream arising from a nearly invisible instrument.

In my sixth and last year of teaching in Kentucky, I gave a talk before a group of about thirty people, all of them considerably older than I, in the banquet hall of a hotel in Huntington, West Virginia. The occasion was West Virginia Poetry Day; I had been chosen to be the banquet speaker and my wife had been invited to attend. I felt honored; not only was I a young and unknown teacher who never before had made a public address, but I had been plucked out of a neighboring state, as if nobody in West Virginia were quite up to the task.

The trip to Huntington took place in October rather than June and my wife and I left our home in early afternoon rather than early morning—but this day, like the day we had spent at the state park, was one of unusual clarity. The trees were changing color; maples and oaks stood out sharply in the sunlight against the dark green of the pines. Our road led past the brick kilns and American Legion Post of Olive Hill and past the entrance to the park; a few miles beyond the entrance, it descended from the hills into a wide valley. Here the land was more fertile, the barns larger and in better repair. Steep-roofed farmhouses replaced the cabins with their rusty washing machines and refrigerators on the slanting porches. The streets of Huntington were broad and lined with trees; stately houses were set back in landscaped grounds. Our town of three thousand seemed a peasant hamlet to which Huntington was the provincial capital. The five-or-six story hotel with its uniformed porter waiting beneath the marquee was large enough to be the palace of an archduke.

Although we arrived on time, most of the guests were already

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seated at the U-shaped table beneath the chandelier, and were speaking to each other in subdued voices. A photographer wandered about, taking pictures. The president of the poetry society, a tall woman wearing a long dress and a corsage that matched the flowers on the table, introduced us to several people. One was the society editor of the Huntington newspaper, another the chairman of the English department at the local university. As my wife and I were escorted to our central places at the bottom of the U, I felt my new suit to be shoddy and ill-fitting.

The event began with a reading by the president of a poem written for the occasion by the governor of West Virginia; he was honorary chairman of the poetry society, and had been responsible for the proclamation giving West Virginia its annual Poetry Day. Following his poem, which praised the state's beauty and its poets, the president began a roll call. As each name was pronounced, a man or woman would rise to recite a poem he or she had composed since the last banquet. Some of the members had memorized their work; others pulled folded sheets from pockets or purses, adjusted their glasses, and carefully read their verses. Halfway through the readings I realized their own words were more important to the members than any speech of mine; I knew also that my prepared talk was much too long and full of quotations, and that to read it aloud would be a disaster.

Indigestion kept me from eating the fried chicken. I put my manuscript next to my plate; with a pen I deleted large segments, drawing connecting arrows between the remaining paragraphs, and put asterisks next to phrases I was so fond of that I wanted to make sure I would give them exactly as written. Once I began to speak, though, I abandoned the typed text almost completely. The subject of my address was "The Creative Process." I talked of divine and human love. My references were to Dante and Virgil and Beatrice and the stars that end each part of *The Divine Comedy*; to the speculations of the mathematician Henri Poincaré about the "aesthetic sieve" possessed by all creators, a sieve permitting only those combinations that are beautiful (and hence usually true) to escape from their dreaming to their conscious states; and to Hindu metaphysics. I was able to speak so readily, I think, because my subject, being both large and noble, assured me of the amplitude and generosity of my own mind. The occasional flashbulbs persuaded me of my status as a celebrity, and my voice became nearly as deep and resonant as that of Dylan Thomas. The ovation I re-

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ceived so gratified me that I immediately gave away my manuscript, though I had made no carbon of it, to the poetry society member who told me she regretted only the brevity of my remarks. For some years I kept a copy of the full page the Huntington newspaper had devoted to the banquet. In a note accompanying the copy she had mailed to me, the president of the society wrote that she thought the headline—"Mankind Equipped for Love, Poetry Speaker Says"—somewhat unfortunate, but she felt I might like to see the pictures. They included one of me, hand raised as I made a point. The brief text said that I had been inspirational.

After we left the hotel, my wife and I walked the streets of downtown Huntington, looking at the window displays of the now-closed department and furniture stores. Huntington, while still seeming exotic—the chairs and clothing in the windows were beyond our income—had managed to become friendlier; it was quite possible that someday we would be residents of such a city. Perhaps the chairman of the English department at the university had been so impressed by my talk that at this moment he was sitting before his desk in the study of one of those stately houses, writing me to find out if I would be interested in a position. Would it be in my best interest to accept such an offer immediately, or should I hold off while inquiring about possibilities elsewhere?

As we drove homeward, the wide valley was blue and shimmering in the light of a full moon. Mists rose from swamps and ponds, little exhalations of a drowsing and comfortable world tumbling through space with its moon. We closed our windows against the rapidly-cooling night air and turned on the car heater. The large farmhouses with their brightly-lit windows disappeared, as we began the rise into the hills; instead we saw now and then a kerosene lamp glowing dimly in a cabin close to the road. Coming around a bend between Olive Hill and Morehead—we were that close to home—we saw what appeared to be a bonfire in the field to our left. I slowed the car and then stopped. Three figures stood before the fire. Beyond it, and illuminated more by the moon than the flames, a mule attached to a pole plodded in a circle. How marvelous to see, from this lonely road, a moonlit field with three men, a fire, and a mule!

"What do you suppose they're doing?" my wife asked.

"Why don't we find out?" I said. Normally I would never have suggested anything like that; I was usually too self-conscious, too uncertain of the propriety of intruding upon people I didn't know.

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I had never become acquainted with any of the hill farmers—nothing more than a word or two with them in the hardware or shoe store, a few phrases exchanged once with a family my wife and I had picked up after their Model A truck had broken down on the highway. The region was theirs, not mine, a fact I could tell simply by looking at the gaunt faces and bony bodies of the farmers who came to town: these men resembled the very fields they tilled. My clothes, my manner of speaking, my literary interests, my occupation as a teacher, all constituted a barrier I had never known how to surmount. I had been told by the older professors at the college that the hill people of our county were as proud as they were poor, and that their shyness or reticence was far in excess of any that I might feel; I had also been told that if they felt themselves victimized or insulted, particularly on a Saturday night in town, they were apt to respond with quick violence—among them were descendants of the survivors of the Tolliver and Martin feud, the most devastating in Kentucky history. Indeed, my college had been founded to bring understanding to these passionate families; the first president had almost been hit by a bullet as he stepped from the railroad car.

My wife and I walked slowly toward the fire. The men were apparently a farmer and his two almost grown sons. The father, the shortest of the three, was bearded. They knew, of course, that we were approaching; but they never looked our way or gave us a greeting. We stopped a short distance from the fire and whispered to each other our conjectures about the equipment. The mule, as it plodded, was operating some kind of mill or press. One of the sons dropped an armful of cane into the hopper. A long and shallow cast-iron vat stood over the flames; two of its legs were shorter than the other pair, giving it a slight tilt. Much like the partitions in a labyrinth or maze, metal strips of various lengths welded to the floor of the open vat served to impede the flow of the dark liquid oozing from the upper side to the lower. Steam rose from the bubbling syrup.

"They're making molasses," my wife said. "It must be sorghum molasses. Look, they must have just cut the cane," and she pointed to the rows of stubble.

Slowly reaching into his baggy overalls, the father pulled a large knife from an inner pocket and unclasped the blade. He bent over and picked up a section of cane and cut two equal lengths of it; before handing them to the younger son, he scraped and whittled

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them a bit and considered them carefully in his open palm. These grave and deliberate actions were without seeming reference to us; but with an equal solemnity the son approached us and placed one piece of cane in my hand and the other in my wife's. At last the father looked at us, at our bodies and our faces; and we, in turn, looked expectantly at him, wondering what we were to do with our gifts. He said quietly, "It's better at the other end," motioning us to the lower part of the vat. The simplicity of the words gave the invitation the clarity and symbolic nature of a dream, and so we will probably remember it all our lives.

We dipped the cane into the heavy syrup collecting and cooling at the lower end, and sucked the sweetness from the surface of the cane and its pith. "Oh yes, this is *very* good," I said, dipping my cane again into the vat, and yet again. Our lips and fingers became sticky, but we found it pleasurable to lick our fingers, to run a tongue over our lips. When we had finished, we stood with the farmer and his sons, looking with them at the fire and the mule still patiently turning in his circle; listening with them to the crackling of the logs, the creaking of the press, the baying of a distant moonstruck hound. The taste of molasses lingered on my teeth and tongue. The fire warmed my stomach and thighs.

"You folks from up North?" the younger son asked.

"No," I said. "We've been on a little trip. We live in Morehead."

"Then you're almost home."

"Almost," I said.

Beyond our backs, a car droned past on the highway without slowing. After the sound had disappeared, I thought that the driver must have seen five figures and a mule. A few minutes later, we thanked our hosts and drove home in silence.

Our son Cris's thirty goats share a pasture with the two fat and elderly horses my wife and I bought when we moved from Ithaca to the Finger Lakes countryside in 1962. Eventually Cris would like to earn his livelihood through the sale of milk and cheese; for the present he works a late shift—3:30 p.m. until midnight—in an Ithaca factory. He does his chores, including the milking, in the early morning hours, gets whatever sleep he can, repeats the chores, bathes, and dashes out the door to his pickup truck, buttoning his shirt as he goes.

For several weeks this past winter, during a period of the heaviest snowfalls, he was both nearly sleepless and always late for work.

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In August, the billy had managed to jump the fence and reach the nannies; eleven kids arrived in late January and early February, the worst possible season for their survival. Two of the births were difficult ones; Cris had to alter the position of the kids in the womb before pulling them from their mothers. Because the nights were too bitter for the kids to remain in the barn, he brought them into the house as they were born, one or two or three at a time.

All eleven were in the kitchen for a week. My wife and I fed them with nursing bottles or pans of warmed milk two or three times a day, and grew so fond of them that after the feedings we let them romp about the kitchen, all eleven at once, even though it meant a considerable amount of cleaning up with paper towels and pails of hot soapy water smelling of disinfectant. The one I liked best was a small white doe. If she were removed from her box, she would vigorously flap her ears and then jump as high as she could; because her muscles were still weak and the linoleum floor was slick, her legs would splay out and she would have to be helped onto her tiny brown hooves.

I have been on sabbatical leave from my university this academic year, and have been working at home, in my study. Several times (after my wife had left for her job in Ithaca and while Cris was still sleeping) I brought that favorite kid into my study, closed the door, placed her on the rug, and let her jump as much as she wanted to; I would lie on the rug and let her nibble at my hair and ears as well as my shirt. I was fond of that kid not only because she was alert and spunky, but because I had helped to save her life. Cris had brought her into the house early one afternoon. Still wet from the fluid in the sac, her body was nearly frozen. We filled the kitchen sink with warm water. While Cris prepared a mixture of glucose and water in a syringe, I immersed the kid: one of my hands supported her belly and chest, the other her limp head. The umbilical cord was still connected to her belly and floated, red and stringy, beside her. Some fecal matter that had been caught in her soft fur floated about, too. It seemed as if my hand were cupped against her heart, so intense was the throbbing.

And yet for a moment that heart faltered and stopped. I massaged the kid's chest while swishing her body back and forth in the water, and the beat came back into my palm as if it were the pulsing of my own blood. Cris pried open the jaws, inserted the tube of the syringe over the tongue and as far back as it would go and squeezed the warm syrup into the throat. In a few moments the

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legs jerked and the kid's eyes opened. My face must have been the first object she saw. The possibility that imprinting might work two ways has not been generally acknowledged.

That night my wife and I drove between high banks of snow the ten miles to Ithaca to hear a concert at Barnes Hall on the Cornell campus. The small auditorium, a former chapel on the second floor, has several stained glass windows in the apse and organ pipes against one wall; the sloping sides of its high ceiling are connected by an intricate arrangement of wooden beams. It has become as familiar an environment to me as a room in my own house. On this evening, the selections were for violin and viola. The violist was a young woman I did not know, but the violinist was an old friend whose playing I always look forward to.

Despite the weather, the auditorium was filled. My wife and I sat in the tier of seats to the left of the stage. The occasional chattering of steam pipes, the single chime every fifteen minutes of the library tower clock, were subsumed into the rhythms of the more central instruments. I was attracted by the fluidity of the dresses worn by both performers. At some point I became aware that I was concentrating upon the slight indentation of the violist's navel; it came and went in the taut and silky fabric of her dress as her arm moved. Such a fixation bothered me; surely no other member of the audience could be so preoccupied. Two wholly serious and bearded youths nearby were following the score as best they could in the dim light; an elderly woman, resting her head within the furry nest of her coat collar, had closed her eyes either to sleep or the better to listen; a trio of girls in jeans in the front row leaned forward—chins cupped in their hands, elbows on their knees—in homage to such superb female talent.

During Mozart's Duo in G Major, the final selection of the evening, I forgot for a time both the audience and the physical presence of the performers and remembered—as I so often have done on this sabbatical leave, perhaps because it is my next to last before retirement—the Kentucky church, the ferryboat, and the faces of the singers (one now dead) in the dark; the circling of a mule under the full October moon and the figures before the fire. My body once had been young enough, my mind naive enough, to permit me the illusion of self-containment, as if the external world existed for the gratification of my senses; and yet the very vigor of my responses had enabled me (so it seemed, listening to Mozart on a cold night in a warm hall in my fifty-seventh year) to vault beyond

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myself like an athlete of pure being. It was as if all that could be glorious for me had already occurred, as if my past signified far more than my future; and so I was returned to the violist and violinist in their sinuous dresses. Was it my sadness, my resignation, that made me aware then that my concentration on the violist all along had been caused by my feelings toward the limp and newborn kid I had immersed in the kitchen sink earlier that day?

The moment I saw, superimposed on the body of the violist, that of the kid—for I saw her drifting in somnolence there, the red cord streaming out, an image with the truth that dreams possess—I experienced an acceptance of pure physicality, a sensation quite unlike any of those of my desirous younger days; it permitted me an immediate tenderness for bodies, human and animal, in all their biological manifestations and changes. This acceptance altered the way I looked at the two performers, the older and the younger, and the way I looked at all the members of the audience, the children, the students, the middle-aged, the elderly; it was in harmony not only with the remembrance of warm molasses on the tongue and images of figures in a field, singers in a church, but with the fluid memories that must have been deep in Mozart's dreaming self as he put certain symbols on paper, symbols that these two performers now were faithfully recreating as spiritual sounds.

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JAMES BAKER HALL

Notes Toward a Politics for the Future

1/ First it will increase
in size & intensity, consuming
Mercury & Venus, bringing
the waters on earth
to boil

Then it will
collapse, glow dimly
(the moon will disappear)
finally burn out

hurling
through darkness & silence
as far as we could have imagined
forever

a small
cinder

2/ Under pressure of starlight
& of its own gravity

heaving clouds of gas & dust
slowly condense

Cloud clusters
thicken, prefiguring planets

In the atmosphere lightning is at work
& heat from a sun

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Millions of years it takes
& millions more, the smallest change
takes centuries

3/ With the first boil, steam
blankets the planet, further warming
the waters

In that wet
heat things acquire
new complexity

Along
the protracted shores
& inland seas, in the brackish
marshes

a cooling off
finally comes & further
contractions

To & fro
foreshadowing
the cell

4/ Where before had been only
random process repetition
occurs Self feeding

bubbles rise to the surface
A small crater lake fed
by hot springs Minerals
of all colors on the shores
& under water The water deep

& still Brownish green

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The many-colored bottom
blurred The water

smells of sulphur

Bubbles rise to the surface
& pop Give off
vapors

After many years
something appears that reproduces
If not here

elsewhere

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ANDREW HUDGINS

The Stoker's Sunday Morning

The curate drones about Abednego,
Shadrach, Meschach, the unnamed fourth,
who stood black and nonchalant
among the ineffectual flames.
He talks as though he daily strolls
through a hell-hot furnace and goes
back home, redolent of ashes and glory.
My hands unfold from morning prayer,
are lined with soot and dark from burning.

At work in the weekday boiler room,
I pile heat on heat in Mississippi,
where there's hardly any need for fire
except two chilly months a year.
The scrape and rise of shovel blade
empties the room into the furnace.
Once in the flames, the coal is beyond sound,
like money, which never even clinks
on the velvet bottom of the offering plate.

The birds outside the stained glass windows
brawl and copulate beneath the eaves—
what dark spasmodic shapes they make
behind the thieves and bright crucifixion!
I've seen the same vague birds in fire,
and fed the flames they live among.
The curate says he has no doubt
that unaccustomed labor opens up the soul
to awe of ordinary things.

Perhaps in memory. Twelve hours a day
the furnace leaves no time for thought

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or mere despair, the sin that claims
much of my time. The rector leads
us in a collect, and then a hymn.
Above us in the cut-glass winter air
the church bell chimes in answer to
our final prayer. Fire, like a choir, can sing,
and water in a pipe will sometimes ring.

JANE ELLEN GLASSER

The Blanket

The wind whips at the window.
I set my dial—a tropic eight.
This dual control, your gift to us.
You like it temperate.

I turn to my poetry; you,
your legal papers, briefs.
After the news one cool leg
trespasses on my zone of sleep.

But I can't sleep. Instead I take
some hidden novel from the drawer;
Colette, Sagan—no matter—
the plots are singular:

an elegant though aging lady
(her husband out of town)

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takes to their bed a lover.
I turn the dial down.

You turn away in dreams.
The wind whines through the night
like a lonely heroine.
I cannot set you right.

First Snow

It is noon when I wake.
I watch the first snow fall,
surprised to feel surprise.
You kissed me and left
by the backdoor at dawn,
my children safe in their
dreams. I promised to call . . .

The snow covers and covers.
So suddenly my grounds change.
My daughters spread arms
and legs in the snow; angels
sleep on their white lawn.
Here, and here, a few blades
pierce through like needles.

I promised to call . . .
but something in me stiffens
and seems, like the trees,
more separate by the shock
of snow. Only yesterday
blackbirds swelled these trees
and connected them with song.

You suspected all along.

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MARCIA B. SIEGEL

Shades of a Kingdom

DANCE HISTORY, that dim and doubtful record of an irrecoverable past, usually fades altogether under the much more convincing reality of live performance. A work not in the ballet repertory might as well not exist, and, with no fixed precedent for comparison, an old work restored to the repertory undergoes changes that are not even perceived as changes. For the first time, dance in the second half of the twentieth century is gaining some real documentation through films and video, and as a result, we may be growing warier of the approximations we've accepted before.

Aside from *Swan Lake*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Giselle* and *The Nutcracker*, ballet might have arisen fullblown in 1909 with the first season of Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, for all the average dancegoer knows. Or indeed, needs to know. New York's two major companies preserve only what serves them from the past—and I think they both prefer to leave us in a state of semi-ignorance about the rest. If people were thoroughly familiar with some finite original *Swan Lake,* wouldn't they have to view George Balanchine's collage version of the second act or American Ballet Theater's umpteenth-generation retread quite differently? Does the audience know that neither of these looks choreographically identical to the *Swan Lake* that engendered 100 years of life-support efforts? Does it matter to anyone but a critic?

Ballet Theater's restoration of the lapsed classic *La Bayadère* (1877) brings these questions to mind. As a critic, I welcome the undertaking as a gift, and I looked at it initially with fascination. It was as if someone had donated the unknown canvas of a famous painter to a museum. But I think we have to understand that a museum piece in dance is not at all the same as an authentic painting. Given the effort and cost of recovering it, I'd hate to think this *Bayadère* is only another excuse for dancing in the grand style, but Ballet Theater gives very little incentive toward another view. The production doesn't encourage the audience to appreciate Marius Petipa, the choreographer, any more fully as an artist; it doesn't draw us into the culture of nineteenth-century Europe from which it came.

In a purely documentary sense, I want to know what has been changed in any reconstruction—even if it's only what the directors changed from the last version they knew. Imagine waving to your neighbor across the street and gesturing a message. Let's say you wanted to communicate something important and poetic, and let's suppose your neighbor was so thrilled by your revelation that he tried to tell someone else, and kept telling lots of other people until your message became a beloved myth. But in order to pass it on to still other people, your neighbor tried to write it in a letter, and then the person fifty miles away who received that tried to repeat what he thought the message was to his family, and his children took it to school, and the teacher put it on the blackboard as a diagram so all

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the children could memorize how they imagined you'd sent it first. That's something like the process by which a ballet is turned into history—only each full-length ballet has thousands of these messages.

A production as expensive and as self-important as this *Bayadère* ought to be accompanied by a very thorough annotation or a report by the directors as to how it was staged. They might explain how close they tried to come to the ballet's original spirit, and also what they think that spirit was. We should be informed who contributed what elements, exactly what was rechoreographed, what was cut or added, and why. At the very least this would reveal to the audience just how hard it is to recover the substance of a ballet—the transmission by word of mouth and muscle, the inadvertent slips of memory, the adjustments for particular bodies, the lost details and guessed-at replacements—all multiplied and magnified down through not one but a proliferating assemblage of dance companies down the years.

Some of the story of how Natalia Makarova put together this *Bayadère* could be pieced together or read between the lines of interviews. A press kit reprinted many valuable accounts of other productions of *Bayadère*, other dancers' interpretations of its significance. But Ballet Theater's official word to its audience consisted of a synopsis of the story—some of which doesn't jibe with what occurs on the stage. The program doesn't even list the dance numbers separately or explain the meaning of the credit line: "Choreography by Natalia Makarova after Marius Petipa." All this puts the audience in the position of looking at what's before us on the same terms as every other old or contemporary ballet, as something newly invented out of cloudy if inspiring precedents. Sometimes a revival makes no claim to authenticity, and can be enjoyed as a product that belongs to our time. Mikhail Baryshnikov's *Nutcracker* and *Don Quixote*, one a familiar old ballet, the other quite unfamiliar in the U.S., are both reworkings in a modern psychological/virtuosic style. Perhaps I should think of Makarova's *Bayadère* like this, but it has the feel of something more. Against my will, I get drawn into archival questions that are unanswerable.

For example, in the climax of the first act, the warrior Solor and the Rajah's daughter Gamzatti celebrate their engagement. (Extensive research and more information than I have available would be needed to trace the alterations in the nature and the sequence of these events from previous productions.) Makarova presents first a classical pas d'action ending in a pas de deux for the couple. At this point the bayadère, or temple dancer, Nikiya enters and dances an expressive solo of unhappiness because Solor has forsaken her. She's then given a basket of flowers by Gamzatti's maid. A poisonous snake slides out of the basket, and Nikiya dies from its bite.

This is ballet-reconstruction shorthand. The producers assume we don't need any expository happenings on the stage, that the feelings of celebration in the formal pas d'action and the feelings of gloom and rejection expressed by Nikiya give us the gist of the action. In the latter half of the twentieth century, most ballet choreography has traded in the pomp and

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circumstance, the mime and the clutter—and the nuance, complexity, amplitude, suspense—for a sleek, fast-breaking, all-dance action line. The modern audience is conditioned by movies, television, high-speed travel and communication to read the body language while enjoying the physical feats of the dance language. We can skip easily over gaps the nineteenth century would have needed filled in.

The action orientation of modern ballet has reduced most of the work we see to the two preoccupations of virtuosity and characterization, preferably combined. The bold, highly physical, psychologically shallow works of the choreographer Glen Tetley, much danced in the ABT repertory, exemplify this modern trend, and so do the stripped-down story ballets of the Soviet choreographer Yuri Grigorovich.

But this view of ballet leaves out a lot that was central to nineteenth-century art, most importantly metaphor. When there's pure dancing in *La Bayadère*, it's not mere mass movement or stars showing off. Petipa—and his most accomplished descendants, Michel Fokine, George Balanchine, Frederick Ashton—could arrange steps and floor designs so that what unfolded on the stage spoke to the deeper levels of recollection or sensibility. The famous Kingdom of the Shades scene—now the second act—represents a supreme vision of the corps de ballet as an articulate, precise instrument within the orchestrated ranks of the classical ensemble. As the twenty-four dancers, all tutu-clad like the soloists and the ballerina, make their entrance one by one down a ramp from limbo, they are each potentially stars, yet each dancer who enters adds greater, more indivisible strength to the group. By the time the last woman has appeared, there's no more question about the individuality of any one; all we're longing to see is how they're going to work together. Their perfect, straight rows, their collective balancings seem as miraculous as fouettés, yet of an entirely different dance tonality.

Behind all this, though, or overshadowing it, is the larger idea that the whole scene is a vision. Solor imagines it all while taking opium, and in terms of this metaphor the Shades might all be doubles of the lost Nikiya. We could say Solor has a subconscious longing to join her in death, which is to be fulfilled at the end of the ballet, when the gods will destroy the temple during his marriage to Gamzatti.

La Bayadère, like many nineteenth-century ballets, however light and decorative they appeared, also addressed a great moral dilemma. What happens to the man who succumbs to the wrong love? That is, must he continue living his life and presumably finding another love, even though he realizes he has lost the ideal one? Successive restorations of the ballet have shifted the ending around; sometimes Solor actually dies and is reunited with Nikiya in the Kingdom of the Shades, and sometimes he simply sees her there as a vision that he'll never recapture. Producers of *Swan Lake* have been ambivalent about the same point regarding Siegfried, the repentant prince. Perhaps it's sufficient resolution if the hero is forced to acknowledge and regret his mistake, and the question of continuing to live without redemption, or dying with it, may be less important.

The parallels between *La Bayadère* and *Swan Lake* are striking. In fact,

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the plots are very similar. The dramatic focus of each ballet is the hero, despite the fact that the center of dance interest is shared by the dual heroines. The man is tormented by his inability to choose between sacred and profane love, or pure versus worldly attraction. Nikiya, the temple dancer, and Odette, the enchanted swan, are of other worlds than the hero, who must play his role within the prescribed conventions of a royal court. Also, both pure heroines are in some sense bound to another man whose power is comparable to the royal power and outside royalty's command. Odette obeys her magician-captor Rothbart. Nikiya is basically a privileged slave, consecrated to purity through the temple, but also in danger of falling into the temporal power of the lecherous High Brahmin. I suspect Solor and Siegfried love these women, at least in part, *because* they are unattainable. Both heroes are offered women who are of their world, and are so attracted to them that they abandon the ideal immediately. Yet neither Gamzatti nor Odile is satisfied with her easy victory, and both are plotting to do away with their rivals.

Of course the death of an ideal doesn't destroy it, so the hero will be condemned to sorrow after it for the rest of his life, or die rather than endure without it. In both ballets, despite the clear distinction between good and evil, the implication is that there's but one woman, who possesses both qualities. In *Swan Lake* both are played by the same dancer. In *Bayadère*, when Nikiya dies and goes to the Kingdom of the Shades, she loses the sinuous curves and "expressive" acting that marked her as more earthy and lowborn, and she becomes completely classical, as noble as Gamzatti. It's as if the classical dance style is what stands for goodness—Nikiya has it first only in her submissive instincts, acquires it in death, when having been born a slave is no longer an impediment. Gamzatti has the noble line but not the noble nature—an accident, her birth into the upper classes.

The dramatic richness inherent in this situation isn't taken advantage of in Makarova's *Bayadère*. Perhaps the story line has become so unglued over time that she couldn't patch it together. Besides the basic triangle plot, there are several potential character conflicts among the contending forces of spiritual versus wordly power, slave against master, the sensual versus the ethereal. The High Brahmin, Nikiya's other admirer, hates Solor and schemes to get him out of the way, but Gamzatti and her father decide to destroy Nikiya instead. When Nikiya is dying of snakebite, the priest offers her an antidote if she'll become his mistress, but she refuses. Most of this is shown by mime passages in an old-fashioned, masklike convention that's neither naturalistic enough to satisfy our modern need for three-dimensional characterizations, nor detailed and lengthy enough to be descriptive in nineteenth-century terms. The conflicts aren't conflicts at all but gestural statements of opposing temperaments or states of mind. Nikiya is soft and submissive and sad; Gamzatti is proud and beautiful; Solor vacillates and vacillates; the High Brahmin puffs up his chest and lifts his arm threateningly. The characters have fixed identities rather than motivated or changeable ones, and this makes the nondance action toneless and uninteresting.

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As director, Makarova seems caught between what is obviously a deep respect for the classical dance tradition and its expressive capability, and a more practical, contemporary desire to make the production clear and well paced. The acting style seems to have come from the former Kirov mime Alexander Minz, who played the High Brahmin and the Rajah in different casts, and who advocates a sort of high-energy minimalism. In an article in *Dance News* he remarked that Makarova "discards an excessive amount of dated pantomime." Just what this material was we can only conjecture from the discrepancies between what's said in the synopsis to be happening and what we actually see happening, but the exaggerated attitudes that fill the gaps make for the wrong kind of economy.

Mime has acquired a very bad name in ballet. It's the easiest thing to let go out of control and the first thing to be pared away by reformers. Minz notes that originally one dancer played Solor's mime passages and another did his dances. So the split between dancing and acting was obviously a very deep and long-standing one in Russian ballet. It has been repaired in the twentieth century in various ways. Balanchine has just about eliminated plot altogether, while the Soviets have tacked big cardboard personality indications like picket signs onto otherwise all-dance ballets. Minz and the other ABT dancers here seem to be working from a Stanislavskian base, motivating from inside, doing little on the outside, filling up the music with rhetorical postures and significant looks. The acting substitutes scale for texture.

This applies also to the dance ideas. Makarova has deleted many of the specialty dances, again I suppose on the theory that the audience won't sit still for the kind of divertissements that look so tired in the ABT *Swan Lake*. A few group dances remain to suggest the place and period: the temple dancers sway around the sacred fire; later a group of fakirs leap over it; there are decorative ensemble numbers with scarves, candles. What's omitted from this version, however, are the character dances that sparkled in all of Petipa's ballets like captured jewelry. His czardas, Kathak dancers, Moorish slaves and harem girls and Chinamen added color and temperament to the more conventionalized behavior of the classical characters.

Petipa didn't try to make authentic copies of these foreign entertainments. He used folk dance steps, pushed to a choreographic brilliance only a dancer highly skilled in ballet could accomplish, and molded them into visually and theatrically effective patterns. It seems to me nothing could be more indicative of the ballet spectacle of this period than the way exotic materials were borrowed, mixed together with no particular care taken to maintain authenticity, and adapted to the dream content of an awakening but still monarchist society. Makarova's *Bayadère* as a narrative comes down to a romance about the class struggle: the rich and powerful take advantage of the weak, and are punished by cosmic retribution. I think the exoticism of *La Bayadère* is not at all that simple, nor is it as modern as the naturalistic Russian novels of the time, which tried to explain and explore a weakening social fabric.

Because it could appeal to the visual and the kinesthetic senses, not

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only the rational, ballet represented a form of escape from social problems—and a recasting of them in less literal guises. PierLuigi Samaritani's beautiful sets for *La Bayadère* seem to me most in the spirit of the ballet's original sensibility. Luxurious and detailed, they're completely fictitious, deliberately two-dimensional and eclectic. The buildings and the landscape don't look specifically Indian, but they do look made-up. What the nineteenth-century audience knew about Petipa's India was that it was hot, heathen, and far away—in all respects outside of the moral and social sanctions under which they lived. To them the Orient was still a fairy tale, and a book of mysteries. If that's too taxing for our imaginations, Makarova's compromise isn't taxing enough.

Ballet Review

edited by **Francis Mason**

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CHARLES W. MILLARD

Marsden Hartley[1]

ALTHOUGH HE WAS RAISED IN CLEVELAND, Marsden Hartley was born in Maine (in 1877) and his artistic career was largely passed there until he went to Europe in 1912. A year of study in William Merritt Chase's New York school in 1899 seems to have encouraged in him the painterly, Ash-can-like style evidenced in *Walt Whitman's House* of 1905, but by 1906 he had turned toward landscape as a subject and showed signs of preferring a Divisionist touch. *Storm Clouds, Maine* of 1906-07 juxtaposes a broadly brushed sky rigorously organized into two large value areas of gray and black against a mountainside whose trees are rendered by short parallel vertical strokes, the cumulative effect of which suggests the work of such non-French painters as Segantini or Ernest Lawson. Color speaks more strongly in the lower half of this composition, in which the relatively achromatic value variations of the sky are translated into variations of hue woven around a brownish purple-orange harmony. Although *Blast of Winter* (1908) suggests that Hartley was not unaware of Twachtman's painting, his *Cosmos* of 1908-09 shows him moving more determinedly in Lawson's direction. Here, the small, parallel applications of paint are organized horizontally in the sky at the top, vertically in the mountains that occupy the center middle distance, and variously in the foreground trees. Combined with a blue-green-red color triad used at high value (black is banished altogether) this gives the picture a particular density and emphasis, heightened by the simplified, rounded forms of clouds, mountains, and trees, suggesting Synthetist simplifications, and by a square format that suppresses directionality. Although the painting is tight and unrelaxed, it hints at the decorative talents that were to serve Hartley so well.

In 1909 Hartley had a brief flirtation with a Ryder-derived manner, in which his color darkened and went toward monochrome again. His touch loosened and broadened, and the forms of land and sky became yet more decoratively abstracted (*Deserted Farm*). By the following year, however, he had opened up the style of *Cosmos*, intensifying his color further and turning to broadly brushed vermiform ribbons of paint less regularly applied than in the earlier work. This new application enlarged the scale of his pictures and, together with the heightened color, gave them a Fauve aggressiveness particularly noticeable in works such as *Red Tree.* By this time—1910—Hartley had become attached to the circle of Alfred Stieglitz and was, therefore, in close touch with Modernism as it was perceived in the most advanced circles in New York. While the fickleness of his experimentation may not seem unusual in a provincial painter exposed to

[1] These observations on Marsden Hartley's work were suggested by the exhibition devoted to him originated by the Whitney Museum in New York, and shown there from 4 March to 25 May 1980.

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such a heady atmosphere, it should be remembered that Hartley was already thirty-three, an age by which most painters would have found themselves. His late maturation not only foreshadows a characteristic of American Modernism, but suggests how open Hartley was to new and more challenging artistic ideas and how much he depended on outside stimulation.

By 1912, the year of his first trip to Europe, still life had emerged as an important subject in Hartley's work, and he had turned to a flatter, thinner, more anonymous paint application. *Still Life No. 1* of that year also shows how he transferred the burden of pattern in his pictures from the brush-stroke to the design of the overall composition, organizing his shapes decoratively and using patterned fabrics and objects, not unlike Matisse. Blue, green, and red (as opposed to the Impressionist blue-green-ochre) still dominate his colors, but are now more muted and sparked with touches of orange and other hues. Space is shallow but carefully constructed, and overall it is clear that Hartley had become aware of Cézanne. This is particularly apparent in another 1912 still life (in the University of Minnesota gallery at Minneapolis) that presents its fruit and crockery against a tipped-up table top covered with a cloth that spills out of the picture at the bottom, the whole rendered in a regular and unified touch.

Although Gertrude Stein's Paris, with which Hartley at once became associated, must have been a striking experience for him, the determining catalyst in the emergence of his first major achievements in 1913 was the less estheticized atmosphere of military Berlin and his encounters with Kandinsky and some of the German Expressionists. With *Musical Theme (Oriental Symphony)* of 1912-13 there appeared almost cataclysmically in Hartley's work a qualitative and stylistic transformation. A series of overlapping, Cubist-derived forms, many of them triangular, spreads diagonally from the lower left to the upper right of the vertical composition. These larger shapes, clearly defined by dark blue lines, contain smaller, more open linear constructions, one of them a musical staff and notes, and around this armature is developed a coloristic pattern of red, green, and yellow applied at high value and with extremely thin brushing. The nature of this chromaticism, and the Orphic overtones of the whole, inevitably recalls Stanton MacDonald-Wright and his fellow Synchromists, working in Paris since 1907, and refers also to Kandinsky's 1912 *Improvisations.* The latter connection is more clearly visible in Hartley's *Painting No. 1* of 1913, in which the controlling linear pattern becomes less Cubist and more diffuse, and color areas are shaded off at the edges or into one another. More disciplined than Kandinsky's contemporary explorations, and hence somewhat more satisfying pictorially, Hartley's paintings are less daring intellectually. Throughout 1913 Hartley continued to pursue the path on which he had embarked, reducing the numbers of shapes in his pictures and enlarging their scale, as well as varying their contours. *Movements,* for example, is composed of an interlocking series of circular, triangular, curving, and serpentine shapes rendered in feathery applications of intense red, blue, and other colors, with areas of yellow and red

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shading off into one another at the upper right that clearly recall Kandinsky. *Painting No. 48, Berlin* continues this trend, its forms spreading across the canvas rather than attempting to hollow out a fictive space. More than one of those forms run off the edge of the canvas, while they are modulated internally with suggestions of shading (not, however, employing black), and their decorative strength is enhanced by the surface-affirming use of numbers and military-derived emblems—epaulettes, badges, and the like.

Hartley continued to produce his masterful and daring decorative compositions throughout 1914 and 1915, until the First World War forced his return from Berlin. He was supported emotionally in this endeavor by a profound attachment to what he perceived as the city's boldness and masculinity, evidenced for him in the collective and individual presence of the military. Military themes pervaded his work, which employed a greater degree of decorative flattening then ever. A series of pictures depicting mounted cavaliers is executed in flat, high-valued, and apparently primitive-inspired combinations of yellow, red, blue, and white. Many of these, like others of the 1914 paintings, have frames painted with rectangular areas of the same colors, contrasting with the internal forms in the manner of the Synchromists. Similar pictorial devices are used in works derived from American Indian motifs—tepees, war bonnets, and the like—the flat patterns of which are clearly intended to recall those of Indian blankets. Finally, black reappears in Hartley's art, not as outlining, but in large areas serving as armatures or grounds. It is most prevalent in the military pictures, and there is no doubt that its expressive nature was not lost on the artist, particularly as some of the works refer in their symbolism to a friend killed in action. In these compositions, the forms depicted tend to cluster toward the center, as in Cubism. Overlapping one another, their patterns are derived from flags and banners, particularly those of Germany and Bavaria, with their stripes and checks, and military insignia, crosses, numbers, letters, etc. Less exuberant and less daring than the 1913 and earlier 1914 pictures, these are nevertheless impressive accomplishments in early abstraction that place Hartley among the pioneers in the genre.

For some twenty years after his return to the United States in 1915 Hartley seems to have lost his way, although he was carried along for a while by the momentum he had established abroad. In 1916 he produced a series of small scale Purist-related synthetic Cubist paintings, quite different in feeling from his German works but accomplished and successful in their own terms. Worked out in restrained colors—purples, grayed blues and greens, silvery grays—these pictures carry pictorial flatness and simplicity of form to an extreme and are wholly abstract. By 1917 Hartley was looking once again toward the decorative and representational, sometimes indebted to Matisse (*Still Life with Eel*), sometimes to southwestern American *santos (Blessing the Melon),* and sometimes to the tradition of German folk painting on glass, in a series of stiffly formal *hinterglasbilder.* But throughout the 1920s and most of the '30s his genius failed him, and he became a wanderer—to New York, New Mexico, and the

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south of France, among other places—suffering financially and drifting artistically.

Hartley's New Mexico landscapes of 1919-20 were of two kinds. One was light-valued in color and small in scale, the larger forms modulated throughout with small applications of pastel color. The other was more heavily impastoed and stronger in color and tonal variation, but no less empty in its Ryder-derived pastiness. By 1921, he seems to have sought support in Braque's art (*Still Life with Pears*), and *New Mexico Recollections* of 1923 recalls the worst of Vlaminck in its dark brown-green-black colors creamily applied and modulated with white. In neither case was French art, which he had never found entirely to his liking, able to help him. Nor was France itself of more assistance. *Vence, Landscape* of 1925-26 is tight and academic in its rendering, and strong in its color and value contrasts, bringing to mind nothing so much as the work of Maxfield Parrish. A trip to Aix-en-Provence in 1927 produced a series of views of Mont Ste. Victoire rendered in a softened version of Cézanne's technique, the small parallel paint applications regularly aligned to create a diagonal pattern across the surface of the canvas. The fact that this application encouraged shading of Hartley's crude and brilliant color, a device directly opposed to his native decorative strength, did not work to the pictures' advantage.

Buffeted from place to place in the search for outside support, Hartley's art began to pull together in the early 1930s. Still heavy and creamy in its paint application and in overall effect, it nevertheless showed promises of what was to come, notably in some of the canvases painted near Gloucester, Massachusetts. Black began to reappear, now as outlining, forms were often simplified and used for their overall shape rather than for such modulations as could be developed within them, and somber colors seemed to reflect Hartley's state of mind with more accuracy and to bolster his art to more effect than the pastel shades or electric hues he had been using. Occasionally, he even permitted himself a return to the abstracted decorative shapes that had been so useful to his Berlin pictures, not infrequently with specific personal reference. Such a work was the 1933 *Eight Bell's Folly, Memorial for Hart Crane.* Worked out almost entirely in dark blue, black, and white, with touches of red and yellow, it isolates a few recognizable and abstract forms against its blue ground in a fierce expressionist outburst. Finally, the consolidation in his art found external support in two places—Nova Scotia and Maine—and in a series of friendships that seemed to answer Hartley's emotional needs and permit him once again to reach for an art of qualitative importance.

With his move to Nova Scotia in 1935, and then to Maine in 1937, Hartley's pictures begin to focus on the austere and rocky landscape around him and on the human figure, often in portraiture, although he never entirely abandoned still life. He seems finally to have realized that his pictures were best when they were simplest and least pretentious, when paint was laid on with the smoothest touch, when scale was largest, when color was the least jumpy, and when there was a minimum of impastoed shading. His portrait and figure paintings present their subjects iconically full-face in bust or three-quarter length against monochrome

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grounds. In *Adelard the Drowned* (1938–39), for example, a massive male figure is seen staring straight out of the canvas, its features simplified, its enlarged hands folded in front of it, the whole rendered in black and white against a brilliant red ground. *The Lost Felice* (1939) represents three figures, one slightly in front of the others, all seated and stiffly frontal, similarly worked out in black, white, and red. On occasion black-white value contrast is used not so much to organize large tonal areas as to model three-dimensional form, and the result can be an overwhelming, almost oppressive, sense of physical presence (*Madawaska—Acadian Light Heavyweight*). In more distant views of the figure, or when figures are situated in an environment (*Canuck Yankee Lumberjack at Old Orchard Beach*, 1940–41), Hartley rendered the surroundings in lighter, less austere hues, such as pinks and softened blues, suggesting the art of Milton Avery, a painter not entirely dissimilar from the late Hartley in spirit. The more congenial nature of these pictures is reflected elsewhere in Hartley's late art. During the forties he made frequent use of composition board as a ground, painting thinly to allow its warm reddish-brown to show through. This is particularly noticeable in his various views of Mount Katahdin, the brushing of which is almost atmospheric. The resulting softening—not of structure but of effect—perhaps evidences a growing ability on Hartley's part to accept the less aggressive part of himself and of his art. That fact notwithstanding, his most impressive achievements in landscape are the pictures that evoke Homer in their painterliness and focus on the rugged coast of Maine. *The Lighthouse* (1940–41) is such a work, marvelously conceived in large areas of light and dark, the former representing sea and sky, the latter rocks and buildings. As with many of the late landscapes, the paint seems to be troweled on, and forms are broadly simplified, in this case jagged in their outlines. Although infinitely more conservative and less daring than Hartley's Berlin pictures of twenty-five years earlier, these landscapes represent the second qualitative peak of his art. Built up vertically more than in depth, they flatten and simplify their forms, sometimes presenting them at raking angles to discourage a reading in depth and to emphasize their function as pictorial organizers. In the seacoast of the extreme northeast Hartley seems at last to have found the external strength he needed to draw his best efforts from him.

Looking back over Hartley's career from the vantage point of his death in September 1943, one is struck by how irregular it was qualitatively and stylistically and how little it seems to have resulted from the expression of a strong, unwavering, internal vision. In a manner not characteristic of artists of accomplishment, it seems to have depended almost entirely on his ability to find in the world around him ruggedness and an overtly masculine principle on which to lean. Bereft of that support, he drifted aimlessly, unable to draw out of himself the courage necessary to the realization of a rigorous vision. The austerity of his native Maine and the military panache of wartime Berlin, along with the art of this country and of Germany, were his primary supports, while the subtler and more complex nature of French art, if not of French life, were of little use to him. One is reminded of Baron Gros, whose art so thoroughly depended on the charis-

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matic strength of Napoleon and on the glories of the Empire, and who fell into academic formula when that support disappeared. For all that, the best of Hartley's art represents, in curiously reverse order, both an extraordinarily rapid absorption of the most advanced ideas of Modernism and the vigorous continuation of an American representational tradition into the earliest years of Abstract Expressionism.

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Reviews

DEAN FLOWER

Jane Eyre's Heirs

> "I've no more business to marry Edgar Linton than I have to be in heaven; and if the wicked man in there had not brought Heathcliff so low, I shouldn't have thought of it. It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff now; so he shall never know how I love him; and that, not because he's handsome, Nelly, but because he's more myself than I am. Whatever souls are made of, his and mine are the same, and Linton's is as different as a moonbeam from lightning, or frost from fire."

So speaks Catherine Earnshaw in the well-known scene from *Wuthering Heights* where she attempts to explain to Nelly Dean why she would marry the eligible master of Thrushcross Grange whom she does not love. At the word "degrade" Heathcliff who has listened in departs angrily before understanding what Catherine really means. But the reader has no difficulty: for Catherine, the conventional idea of heaven is abhorrent, whether defined by the crotchety old manservent Joseph with his warped Calvinism or by the complacent Christian reassurances of Nelly or by the genteel social values of the Grange. *Her* heaven is "the middle of the heath on the top of Wuthering Heights," and her embodiment of that desire is Heathcliff. If he be devil and demon to the guardians of other heavens, so be it; that is her deepest self, and she covets no other. She blames her brother Hindley ("that wicked man in there") for Heathcliff's present humiliation (i.e., her own); Hindley has licensed her, through his cruelty to them both, to seek worldly status and power through marriage. Naturally any thought of marriage between Heathcliff and Catherine would degrade their identity. They are bound together far more powerfully and profoundly than any social contract could ordain. For Catherine to feel this requires, of course, a divided sense of self: one that remains on the Heights, defiantly unregenerate, at once spiritual and earthly, and one that falls fatefully, necessarily, into the world of time, culture, marriage, power, child-bearing and mortality. But Catherine means to endure the division because without it, without the self-transcendence Heathcliff embodies, her existence would be purposeless, without a soul.

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar have much to say about this novel and this scene from it in their recent re-examination of women writers in the nineteenth century.[1] Fundamental to their study is the analysis of

[1] THE MADWOMAN IN THE ATTIC: The Woman Writer in the Nineteenth Century Literary Imagination, by *Sandra M. Gilbert* and *Susan Gubar*. Yale University Press. $30.00; $10.95.

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identities as sharply divided as Catherine Earnshaw's. Indeed, without the concepts of the double, the *alter ego*, the projected self, and the monitory self, their lengthy study of the anxieties of female authorship from, roughly, Jane Austen to Emily Dickinson, would perish for lack of internal logic. Gilbert and Gubar bravely attempt—and I think mainly succeed, despite staggering odds and their own besetting politics—in using new critical methods to explore the female writer's identity. Biographical facts (apart from the fact of gender) are used sparingly, and sociological data not at all. The "real lives" of these women flow through their metaphors, their personae, their fictions. If we would know Emily Brontë, and by extension the distinctive problems of comparable women writers considered *as women*, then we must plumb to the depths such phenomena as Catherine's cry, "Nelly, I *am* Heathcliff" or her paradoxical "it would degrade me to marry Heathcliff now." To search these depths the authors require a certain latitude of speculative freedom, as they attempt to synthesize the psychic biographies and hidden testaments of their subjects. Impressive as their scholarly apparatus is, the method reminds me of Stephen Dedalus in the library scene of *Ulysses*, inventing the life of Shakespeare from his works.

Gilbert and Gubar decide to take Catherine at her word. If she "is" Heathcliff, then Heathcliff must be at some level female; that is, he must represent all her hunger, rebellion, defiance, and longing for independence, all that Edgar unconsciously but nonetheless forcibly denies her. Without denying Heathcliff's Satanic-Byronic maleness, the authors suggest that his ambiguous identity (human-animal-demonic) substantiates his deepest function as Catherine's "whip," her weapon for revenge on a world that denies her female soul. That this revenge both succeeds and fails by turning upon itself in twin anorexic suicides (his repeating hers after years of futile struggle) is very much to the point. Less persuasive are the moments where the authors tax Catherine for being society's victim: "Her . . . explanation that it would 'degrade' her to marry Heathcliff is an equally inevitable product of her education, for her fall into ladyhood has been accompanied by Heathcliff's reduction to an equivalent position of female powerlessness, and Catherine has learned, correctly, that if it is degrading to be a woman it is even more degrading to be *like* a woman." How tricky all this becomes! It overrefines a secondary point and misses the main one. Heathcliff's degradation should certainly be read as an intensifying echo of Catherine's, but the degradation specified in the passage concerns Catherine's refusal to degrade her *real* self by the worldly taint that marrying Heathcliff would imply. In "overhearing" Catherine's word "degrade" Gilbert and Gubar make the same mistake Heathcliff does in assuming she has rejected him.

The authors conclude that *Wuthering Heights* is Emily Brontë's "Bible of Hell," a Urizenic Black Book. They treat the second half, where Hareton and Cathy re-enact the original romance, not as an effort to balance the first libidinous passions with the later quieter virtues, but rather as a "passionate elegy" for the quenchless love that was, a weak echo to make us long for that paradise lost. It's a good idea, well-supported by close

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reading of the final lines which seem so peaceful and in fact celebrate the restlessness of Catherine-Heathcliff's unregenerate impulses even in death. But surely Emily Brontë was a more complex and ambivalent writer than this emphasis conveys. As Denis de Rougemont shows in *Love in the Western World*, Brontë was not alone in reverencing passion without being able to find a place for it except in the realms of myth, longing, and fantasy. Driven to a clenched-fist gesture by their modern feminism, Gilbert and Gubar make Brontë's final statement into covert defiance. What we have, I think, is closer to Brontë's final dramatization of the necessary suppression of Catherine's untrammeled energies but not a repression of those vital forces. Catherine and Heathcliff disappear into their unquiet graves in the final lines of the novel in much the same way as the secret sharer in Conrad's story sinks downward into the darkness of the subconscious, there to energize without destroying the waking self.

Charlotte Brontë, however, provides the centerpiece of the Gilbert and Gubar debate. Not apparently so subtle with foils and untrustworthy narrators nor so scrupulously precise about metaphor as her sister, Charlotte (as is a little too well-known) sometimes wrote with her eyes closed, found fictions intuitively close to her own subjective adventures, and best of all discovered in the dimmer regions of her psyche Bertha Mason Rochester, the paradigmatic madwoman of so many female writers' imaginations. It emerges that Charlotte is fully the equal of Emily as a novelist. Characters who may seem peripheral or circumstances too fortuitous or imagery too melodramatic are put into logical perspective by Gilbert and Gubar. Arguing that a female writer's fundamental anxiety has to do with sharply divided feelings about herself as a woman (she should be "quiet") and as a writer (she should speak), the authors trace a number of manifestations of this anxiety. One is that a woman should be what a man, or the patriarchal culture, expects her to be. Consider the effect, it is argued, when women experience the familiar contradictions of angel versus temptress, vessel of purity versus foul cistern of evil; consider the endorsement of misogyny that Milton's version of Eve conferred on the nineteenth-century literary imagination. Consider the economic and biological dependencies of women which continued even while their voices were heard more and more frequently in poetry and fiction both English and American. Considering all this (and more) in three long introductory chapters Gilbert and Gubar find that women writers suffer particularly acute problems of identity that issue typically in schizoid behavior, types of anorexia nervosa, bulimia, agoraphobia, and claustrophobia. However valid all this is in general, it makes excellent sense out of a great deal that is obscure or seemingly disproportionate in Charlotte Brontë's fiction, most notably *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*.

Plain Jane Eyre must be the most sympathetic victim-heroine ever plucked out of the *spiritus mundi* of Western civilization. First an orphan humiliated in the Reed family, then punished and starved at Lowood School, escaped to Thornfield where she becomes Rochester's governess-slavey, exiled into the wilderness, and hounded at last by a loveless saint who commands her Christian self-surrender, still and all Jane inwardly

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resists all her oppressors. Nowadays she seems fatefully well-suited to embody Everywoman's grievances at the hands of male-dominant society (if one must look to literature for that), but I admit to finding her less magnificent as a sufferer than as a celebrant of the individual self. Gilbert and Gubar convincingly show not only how Jane is ringed round with "monitory selves" or vain "role models" which she must reject if the pilgrim's progress of her true self is ever to succeed, but also how one of these potential selves is in fact her "darkest double." The authors prove that Rochester's madwoman in the Thornfield attic does what Jane in some region of her psyche wants to do: combat Rochester's tyranny, tear up the wedding veil he offers, laugh "insanely" at modesty and self-restraint when they come at the price of personal freedom, and destroy the house which symbolizes Rochester's authority and power—punishing herself in the process. Every "manifestation" of Bertha, the authors suggest, arises from some unacknowledged experience of Jane's anger or resentment. Significantly, once the parallels are suggested, they become impossible to unsee: the resemblance of Bertha's white sheet or shroud and Jane's wedding dress, for example, or Jane imprisoned in the red-room at Gateshead as a foreshadowing of Bertha's several incendiary rages, or Jane's repeated feelings of monstrosity. But these instances only hint at the richness and complexity of the connection. Disturbingly, "Bertha not only acts *for* Jane," the authors demonstrate, "she also acts *like* Jane," and the dimension added to Jane's characterization by this discovery immeasurably strengthens it in passion, sensuous energy, capacity for evil as well as good, willfulness and authority. It makes her, in short, fully human—a heroine and not just a victim.

Yet Gilbert and Gubar are half in love with the notion that female writers must all have madwomen in their attics. They like to drop in quotations from Sylvia Plath, Adrienne Rich, Anne Sexton, Virginia Woolf, Simone de Beauvoir, and others, to reinforce the notion that mad Bertha and her kind must be a universal in women's writing. They tend as a result toward admiration for the rampant energy of this captive, self-destructive figure. Hence they wish upon *Jane Eyre* a bolder, more rebelliously feminist conclusion, not the modest withdrawal from the world that Jane and Rochester make at Ferndean. After so much superb close reading, this is a disappointment. For Jane Eyre's ultimate *alter ego* must be, as the ending shows, Rochester himself. "My bride is here," he says, "because my *equal* is here, and my likeness." Not only is the blind Rochester shriven of his worldly status and pride, his masculine arrogance and manipulativeness, but Jane too has exorcised both her combative anger and her equally destructive impulses toward self-abnegation. Few moments in literature are more moving than their final scene together (Ch. 37) where each acknowledges the other as "master," guide, and support. What Emily Brontë could offer only as a desperate romantic desire, that is, the dream of Heathcliff and Catherine as a gynandrous single being transcending the agonies of sexual difference, Charlotte Brontë envisions as an achievable human interdependence transcending society's imprisoning sexual definitions. The end, in fact, recovers the innocent beginning

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when Jane and Rochester met in the moonlight, he fallen from his high horse and injured and she unafraid to respond to so plain a mortal as herself. There is less final rage at the injustices of a male-dominant society in this novel than there is celebration of love freely given. Yet the pre-condition of this love was Jane's hard-won personal freedom. That required all the powers of her deceptively-frail self, especially those "forbidden" ones of her darkest double.

Gilbert and Gubar succeed perhaps even more emphatically with *Villette*, where the peculiar inertia, voyeurism, and self-detachment of Lucy Snowe make for a more difficult (and less obviously unified) narration than Jane Eyre's. Again making full use of the *alter ego* principle, the same one by which we understand Pip in *Great Expectations* through a series of parallel identities (Orlick, Herbert, Wemmick, Startop, Trabb's boy, and so on), Gilbert and Gubar show the agoraphobic self-suppressions of Lucy Snowe against the unattractive alternatives of Paulina (Little Polly, the wife as perpetual child), the willfully-shallow Ginevra Fanshawe, and Madame Beck the ruthless manipulator and spy. Even more interestingly we are shown that the grotesque Madame Walravens and the nun in the attic represent the two drastic extremes of Lucy's tormented identity. For the mysterious nun in amongst all those cloaks (potential identities?) in the attic of Madame Beck's school for young women, who so clearly embodies for Lucy the way of chastity and self-denial unto death, *evokes* by the very severity of sublimated passion her witch-like antithesis in Madame Walravens. Again, as the authors nicely put it, "aggression is the product of . . . submission" and "malevolence is likewise the other side of . . . suicidal passivity."

Nowhere in their close attention to Lucy Snowe's passivity as an instance of the female writer's predicament are Gilbert and Gubar more convincing than when they explore the characterization of the actress Vashti in Chapter 23 of *Villette*. Listen first to how Charlotte Brontë's fine biographer, Winifred Guerin, describes the novelist's reaction to the famous Rachel, impassioned *tragédienne* of the Comédie Française:

> Rachel's diabolical inspiration affected Charlotte still more powerfully in the part of "Camille"; "I shall never forget her—She will come to me in sleepless nights again and again . . ." To her other correspondents she also confessed her subjection to the great actress's thrall. "On Saturday I went to see and hear Rachel," she told Ellen [Nussey], "a wonderful sight, terrible as if the earth had cracked deep at your feet, and revealed a glimpse of hell. I shall never forget it. She made me shudder to the marrow of my bones; in her some fiend has certainly taken up an incarnate home. She is not a woman; she is a snake."[2]

But what Charlotte wrote to her friends could not have been the deepest truth of what she felt. The novel, not the letters, affords the more intimate glimpse. In the novel Rachel becomes Vashti, the queen in the Book of

[2] *Charlotte Brontë: The Evolution of Genius* (1967), p. 481.

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Esther who refused to obey the order of King Ahasuerus to display her beauty before the assembled princes. Brontë thus makes her more than a demonic soul suffering unintelligible torments; rather she becomes the female writer-performer whose libidinal energies drive her toward ever more rebellious and self-defeating outbursts of feeling, of "Hate and Murder and Madness," in the effort to preserve her separate identity. Vashti expresses in such tormented form what Lucy Snowe icily represses in her own secretly tempestuous imagination. Brontë describes Vashti on the stage, "locked in struggle, rigid in resistance," and it literally precipitates chaos in the theater. A cry of "fire" goes up, and the men (pointedly) stampede for the exits. Despite some hyperbolic phrasing here, Gilbert and Gubar have estimated very shrewdly, I think, Brontë's proximity to both her narrator and Vashti as that narrator's secret sharer. Although they do not explore the context further, the Vashti chapter provides a crucial turning point in Lucy's relation to Dr. John (Paulina reappears in the theater, a casualty of Vashti's passion, to take Lucy's place in Dr. John's affections) and to M. Paul (whose slightly comical rages Lucy will now see more clearly as spiritually akin to her own unexpressed ones). Clearly then, there are ample rewards for a feminist criticism as open as this one is to the logic of contradictory compulsions. "Thus far and no farther!" Vashti cries out in her (acted) death throes, defying her imprisonment in a death-in-life stasis. Gilbert and Gubar read it with complete authority: no longer was it possible to Brontë to envision a peaceful resolution for her several potential selves.

What works with Charlotte Brontë, however, fails rather badly but quite predictably with Jane Austen. Gilbert and Gubar seem to think that Austen must be so subservient to her "patriarchal culture" that she cannot recognize her oppressors. They relegate Austen's irony to the realm of "duplicity," i.e., failing to be "sincere," and chide her for failing to welcome the "nastier, more resilient and energetic" female characters into her scheme of things. The following is typical:

> Perhaps less obvious instances of Austen's duplicity occur in her representation of a series of extremely powerful women each of whom acts out the rebellious anger so successfully repressed by the heroine and the author. Because they so rarely appear and so infrequently speak in their own voices, these furious females remain secret presences in the plots.

Despite such patently desperate attempts, the authors fail to turn up any authentic madwomen in Austen's attic. Although the implication is that Austen must have been a greater victim of her society at the turn of the century than she would have been thirty years later, I think the difference is more fundamental. Unlike Mary Shelley and the Brontës, Austen saw no value in celebrating the anarchic potential of human character nor did she admire the "evasions and reservations of feminine gentility," as Gilbert and Gubar claim. Austen wanted manners to express morals, not stand in their way. We may admire Jane Fairfax, but we like Emma Woodhouse (as Mr. Knightley does) and want her to discover for herself

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that openness and honesty are best in all human relationships. Gilbert and Gubar see only reprimand and rebuke to the "imaginative and physical" freedom of the heroines in these novels. Caught in the grip of a grim feminism, Gilbert and Gubar cannot afford to admit an alternative, comic view of human nature, one that thrives on the acceptance of limitation and finitude.

I skip over admirable discussions of *Frankenstein* and the "angel of destruction" in George Eliot's novels to the long concluding essay on Emily Dickinson. To their great credit, Gilbert and Gubar offer no final theory or manifesto, except to claim that Dickinson took one step further than her predecessors by becoming in fact a kind of madwoman in an Amherst attic. Even more boldly speculative than earlier portions of the book, this one again succeeds because of its close sympathetic reading of individual poems and not because of any definitive theory. The authors propose that Dickinson elected to live a deliberately eccentric existence, posing now as a deceptively innocent child, now as an empress or queen, yet again as a gnomic recluse, defined by nothing so much as her shifting personae from poem to poem—and these stitched together and hidden away for almost none to see while she lived. None of this will sound startlingly new. But what works in it is, first of all, the suggestion of some real madness behind this poetic strategy, especially in moments when the mask refused to come off, and second the suggestion that Dickinson's obsession with death must have stood for a way of discussing madness. Unlike most critics who take the obsessive renderings of the experience of death in Dickinson's poetry simply as proof of her seriousness or as a sign of her religious skepticism or as a fixation derived from anxieties about the Civil War, Gilbert and Gubar argue that the poems about death are really poems about *living* death: entrapment, separation, claustrophobia, mental cleavage, and nonentity. They define Dickinson as feeling as if she were essentially "Nobody," i.e., fearful of being a loathsome "Somebody" who parades her egotism "to an admiring bog." Yet she was a nobody who would not be silent, who willed herself to live in the successive personae of her lyrics. Just as she "felt a funeral in [her] brain," it is argued, Dickinson in another poem (J. 937) "felt a cleaving in [her] mind." Death is but madness, the dissolution of the self into an immediate experience of nonentity.

Although Dickinson, to my mind, repeatedly evokes gothic imagery only to repudiate it or transcend it, Gilbert and Gubar make ingenious use of its obsessive presence. They read extremely well such poems as "This Chasm, Sweet, upon my life" (J. 858), "My life had stood—a loaded gun" (J. 754) and "One need not be a Chamber—to be Haunted" (J. 670), where the gothic imagery is put to such nearly-lurid use without our feeling that anything but a human voice is speaking. The haunted mind, the grim self-as-weapon, and the chasm of living burial remind me by turns of Brontë's Bertha and Vashti, of Poe's Madeleine Usher, of Dickens' Miss Havisham, and of Emily Brontë's Catherine. Once more we are shown that the familiar old gothic stage-props may serve the most unexpectedly subtle psychological purposes. The analysis of "A Spider sewed at Night" (J. 1138) finally shows the authors at their very best, demonstrating how one of Dickinson's most self-revealing versions of her

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writer's identity, both imperial and reclusive, makes a final refuge for herself in the gnomic physiognomies (an extraordinary pun lurks here) of her multiple selves. Although much of this chapter remains tantalizingly sketchy, even hurried at times, it points the way toward a rich new vein of Dickinson criticism.

I am not sure how much it matters that *The Madwoman in the Attic* ultimately fails to prove its case: that a distinctive female literary tradition exists; that women writers suffer more than their male counterparts, or that they suffer in unique ways; that society which must be "patriarchal" will necessarily produce something termed "male texts" which will necessarily echo the male-dominant culture; that "female texts" differ from male in that they subvert even as they seem to yield to male authority. The book makes a great many claims of this sort, not many of which prove to be useful. Was authorship really so problematic as that for women in the nineteenth century? How does one explain then their profusion and the obvious high quality of their achievements? Gilbert and Gubar make all women writers sound so desperately embattled, and a good many (though by no means all) of them were, but the fact remains that a great many of them got published. The equivalent cannot be said for female painters, composers, dramatists, and architects who—without male patronage and money simply did not exist—to say nothing of the other professions where only a hardy few gained a foothold: journalism, medicine, law, banking, business. The risk of depicting female poets and novelists as dreadfully beleaguered is sentimentality. Not that their hardships as women were not real and engrained in their work, but they themselves would have scorned our sympathy. As Emily Dickinson put it, "No rack can torture *me*."

The argument for a distinctively female literary heritage hypothesizes a "mythic woman artist" and a "shattered tradition that is her matrilineal heritage," a "lost Atlantis" of female writing. Shattered tradition? What all this comes down to is rhetoric, urging more understanding for female concerns. That cannot hurt, but the fact remains that Western culture is inherited willy-nilly by females as well as males, to make use of however they will. Neither gender has the choice of opting out and so evading it utterly. Yet how familiar the tactic is! Remember "Black English," or how James Baldwin—who was saturated after all with the language and feeling of the Protestant tradition—tried to explain that Rembrandt's works could never mean for a black man what they do for a white? So too Gilbert and Gubar vastly underestimate the adaptability and resourcefulness of humans. Their whole book, however, exemplifies this natural instinct: take whatever is useful from Freud, from the New Criticism, from Northrop Frye and Bruno Bettelheim and Harold Bloom. When it comes to their own critical method, it turns out, gender matters not a whit. And that is as it should be.

The argument that women writers suffer more than their male counterparts collapses instantly when we reduce it to individuals. Jane Austen struggled more than Thomas Hardy? Gertrude Stein more than Theodore Dreiser? Sylvia Plath more than Franz Kafka? Emily Dickinson more than Herman Melville? Surely women writers must deal with their

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problems of gender in ways quite different from men and in ways that continue to need critical understanding. But Gilbert and Gubar are mistaken to argue that male writers somehow have things easy because "patriarchal society" endorses them. How easily they lump together "male texts" and "male authority," as if there were nary a difference between the male writer and his society. Or as if women writers were the only ones to resort to subversive tactics, concealed parodies, exile and cunning, or the polemical re-vision of their diseased worlds.

What's best about *The Madwoman in the Attic* is its careful consideration of individual writers as found within their works. The effort to construe their experiences as "uniquely female" meets insuperable difficulties. Human beings who write are more complex and various than simple gender classifications will allow. What matters finally is individual talent, not gender. Unfortunately, Gilbert and Gubar tend to look for "*the* story that all literary women would tell if they could speak their 'speechless woe.' " They expect to find in novel and poem the figure of a madwoman who "is usually in some sense the *author's* double, an image of her own anxiety and rage." And find it they do, in an undeniably interesting array of examples. But the cost of this tactic is too high; it requires that we believe all female literature has an autobiographical code to decipher. It implies ultimately that autobiography—and not art itself—is what matters. The persistent motif of the double, which Gilbert and Gubar like to define as a uniquely female "schizophrenia of authorship" ought at least to have been tested against its equivalents in male writing. I suspect that the anorexic Bartleby, the schizoid Dr. Jekyll, the guilt-ridden Roderick Usher, and the Marlowe who buries madman Kurtz (to name only an obvious few) would reveal a suspiciously similar "schizophrenia of authorship" if they were pressed hard enough.

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VERNON YOUNG

One Hell of a Life

OF THE TWO BIOGRAPHIES REVIEWED HERE,[1] the prospective reader may decide for himself how much detail he cares for in the recapitulation of what one can only call a hell of a life. Both works have been amplified by their authors from earlier published material. Mr. Alpers' book is the more formidable, buttressed and framed by copious footnotes, lengthy quotations from Katherine Mansfield's stories and letters and from her friends and foes, a useful chronological reference, and appendices, less useful, comprising a parody by K. M. of the Russian short story and pseudonymous attacks on her from the pages of a magazine once published by A. R. Orage. If you are an English professor you will no doubt choose Alpers' volume because it has the sort of exhaustive research which no one in an English Department dares not admire. But Meyers' book, about 125 pages shorter, is commendably better written—he is not so easily lured from his narrative line—is more helpfully illustrated and should satisfy anyone but those who insist on every stone being turned, with every toad being thereby exposed. (Or you can wait for yet another biography of K. M., now in the works, by Claire Tomalin.)

Alpers, while not slavish in his admiration of K. M., clearly feels a special sympathy for his subject because he, too, is a New Zealander, which gives him a closer identification, not with the fiction alone, but also with the situation of an exile from Down Under. And he extends himself further than Meyers as a literary critic. By some of his extensions I am not impressed. He believes, for instance, that K. M.'s affinity with Gogol is closer than it is with Chekhov; what he actually demonstrates is the seeming kinship of their characters and their fates. "Both were compulsive liars, compulsive letter-writers, and compulsive travellers." Both ended their lives, betimes, with an act of self-immolation under the influence of a fanatical priest or mystic. All the same, the differences between Gogol and Mansfield seem to me greater than the contingent similarities of their behaviour. Further incited by T. O. Beachcroft's survey of the English short story (1968) and by a pastiche K. M. wrote in 1911 of an idyll by Theocritus, Alpers suggests that the Syracusan Greek was also a nearer point of departure for K. M. than Chekhov. These pedantic hunches are really not very conclusive and the fact of the matter is that as late as 1922 K. M.'s identification with Chekhov was sufficiently intense for her to fantasize in her Journal: "I want to adopt a Russian baby, call him Anton and bring him up as mine, with Kot[2] for a godfather and Mme. Chekhov for a godmother." Alpers is more, if not entirely, pertinent in these com-

[1] KATHERINE MANSFIELD: A Biography, by *Jeffrey Meyers*. New Directions. $17.50. THE LIFE OF KATHERINE MANSFIELD, by *Antony Alpers*. Viking. $16.95.

[2] S. S. Koteliansky, a Ukrainian, who collaborated with Lawrence, Murry, K. M. and others, on excellent translations of Russian literature.

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parative matters when he quotes a landscape passage from K. M., followed by a sequence from Virginia Woolf, in order to point up the former's superiority. This does at least illustrate how good K. M. could be at her best and how dubious V. W. could be when straining for abstraction, but since the intention behind each quotation was not precisely comparable, Alpers' exercise seems arbitrary and I don't think anyone would assert that on balance K. M.'s contribution to modern fiction is as luminous as Woolf's. I find it difficult today fully to appreciate K. M.'s tone and perspective, what Alpers rightly calls her "intuitive classicism." The stories seem neither so "objective" nor so psychologically singular as they once did; perhaps because so many short-story writers since, in England and in the United States, have learned her lesson (if that's where they learned it) and have in many cases surpassed her. I do agree with Alpers when, in a moment of parenthetical enthusiasm, he admits to preferring her letters and her Journal to all her fiction; they are indeed more vivid.

For that matter, if pioneer achievement is what we're talking about and psychological penetration is the issue that justly interests us, Dorothy Richardson, whom I have just been rediscovering, displays insights far more startling than any I know of in K. M. She describes (in "The Tunnel," part of the *Pilgrimage* succession she wrote before 1919) the sensation of her *alter ego*, Miriam, when renting her first room in London, that she was already familiar with the objects in it. "You know in advance when you are really following your life. These things are familiar because reality is here. Coming events cast *light*. It is like dropping everything and walking backwards to something you know is there." This may have been the sort of "detail" which K. M. herself objected to in Dorothy Richardson's novels when she argued in a review that they "had no place in the world of art." (If they had not, all of Proust is lost to the world of art!) One does wonder how often K. M. knew in advance when *she* was really following her life.

She was born Kathleen Beauchamp in New Zealand, 1888 (a Libra, if you care), daughter of a businessman who suffered, in her eyes, the characteristic diminution that most businessmen suffer who are unfortunate enough to sire artists! For the record, he was more sympathetic toward K. M. than might have been expected from a Colonial philistine and though, when she emigrated, he kept her on a short leash financially, he did contribute to her sustenance; yet she never ceased to bitch at his parsimony, long after it was reasonable for her to demand greater responsibility from that wet towel she married, John Middleton Murry, especially in her expiring years, when he was no longer a "struggling editor." Preceding that odd alliance, her youthful years in England were passed in penury and promiscuity, flighty infatuations and abrupt retractions. On one occasion, already pregnant by a musician from New Zealand (whose twin brother she had previously been madly in love with), she married a chap named Bowden and deserted him the same evening. By the time her marriage was itemized in the newspaper she was on tour with the musician in question and subsequently lost his child by a miscarriage. In 1910 she contracted gonorrhea (author unknown) which, incorrectly diagnosed,

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culminated in arthritis. She met and lived with Murry in 1912 (they were unable to marry until 1918) but by 1915 she had found him inadequate, for many reasons, and she left him to have a brief affair with Francis Carco, a French novelist, in Paris. Her life with Murry thereafter followed this pattern, in which her frequent flights to the continent seldom aroused him to pursuit.

Neither Meyers nor Alpers, in my opinion, takes significantly enough the effect on her relations to society of her initial hostility to her father and her passions for other girls, reenforced by her adulation of Oscar Wilde and other *fin de siècle* personalities. When she went to live in England the second time, permanently, she hurled herself at the world with suicidal vehemence, as if already resolved to be annihilated. (Coming events did not, for her, as they did for Miriam in "The Tunnel," cast *light*!) She became a bohemian, first from economic necessity, later on compulsion. Although she was not as morbid as this may make her sound, she did in a sense echo Baudelaire's declaration, "I am killing myself because I am useless to others and a danger to myself." She never ceased to look for a dominant—but not too dominant—male (the men she chose all had an excessive feminine component), and her relations with women were frequently ambivalent. For twenty years, throughout her life with Murry and her runaway excursions, she was attended, more than intermittently, by a loyal female named Ida Baker, whom she re-christened Lesly Moore (referred to throughout, in Alpers, as L. M.), on whom she desperately depended and, at moments of stress, abused with unseemly reproaches. The relationship does not seem to have been, consciously at least, sexual. L. M. needed to be bullied; K. M. needed someone to bully; they made a perfect neurotic adjustment to one another. But this also decribes her looseleaf union with Murry. *Were* they "in love" or did each fake up the other? He certainly faked her up; she had always a shrewd view of him which she suppressed when she felt under pressure to employ the rhetoric of love. Here, we continually enter the dark, for as we know now Murry's account of her after her death was a gross falsification of her beauty, her talent and her behaviour, probably inspired by his own bad conscience, if he had one; he was easily the most despised literary figure of his time (not for his lit-crit, for his character) and while aware of it he remained impenitently unaffected by anyone's opinion. His biographer, Frank Lea, quoted by Jeffrey Meyers, said that Murry only plucked up courage to kiss K. M.'s breasts four months after they had been living together. "Beyond that", wrote Murry, "I never made love to her—right to the end." Neither his letters nor hers support this astonishing allegation. (I feel as if I should exclaim with Vershinin, in *The Three Sisters*, "How strange everything is!")

Since most judgments by writers of another writer's personality are unreliable, we have to take on trust the impression that K. M. made on those who knew her. She was extravagantly admired by men who had designs on her; she was condescended to, albeit wined and dined, by the Garsington and Bloomsbury set. Bertrand Russell, reminiscing in 1949, noted that he had "admired her passionately but was repelled by her dark hatreds." Lytton Strachey introduced her, skeptically, to Virginia

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Woolf, with the assurance that she had "an ugly impassive mask of a face, a sharp and slightly vulgar-fanciful intellect." Woolf recorded in her diary that she was "a little shocked by [K. M.'s] commonness at first sight: lines so hard and cheap" and that she stank (of perfume) like a "civet cat that had taken to street walking." Presumably, she was personally courteous to K. M. and she did modify her views of the woman, confessing years later that K. M.'s was the only *writing* she had ever been jealous of.

Nobody of the class D. H. Lawrence was always prepared to despise was ever as breathtakingly cruel to K. M. as he. After he had failed to incorporate Murry and Katherine in his Utopian Couples arrangement (obviously it was Murry's intimacy he was angling for) and had behaved with such childish ferocity toward Frieda that the Murrys felt obliged to back out, he never forgave *Katherine*! (Did he ever forgive anyone?) Alpers makes it clear that the previous rumor was correct: that Lawrence, in a letter to K. M., after her contraction of tuberculosis was patent and acknowledged, wrote in these words or to this effect—"I loathe you. You revolt me, stewing in your consumption." Equally despicable was his reaction to reviews of *Bliss and Other Stories* in a letter to Mary Cannan, "Spit on her for me when you see her"—and to Koteliansky, at one juncture, he wrote that K. M. was with Murry on the Riviera "doing the last-gasp touch, in order to impose on people. . . . Two mud-worms they are, playing into each other's long mud-bellies." After her death he referred to her as a "shabby little slut." The genius with which Lawrence could sometimes explain our relationships with one another and the superlative talent he had for evoking, in prose or poems, the spirit of place, can never be minimized or refuted. But the more one learns about him as a person the clearer it becomes that he was unspeakably vindictive, beyond all justification and common decency.

K. M. had her first lung hemorrhage in February of 1918. She tried not to believe the worst during a nightmare journey she took to southern France (the War was still on) without Murry, who was then employed as Chief Censor at the War Office. By October of that year she was informed by two English TB specialists that she had better enter a sanatorium or she would not survive four years. She refused to enter a sanatorium. She survived four years and three months. The interim is pathos, folly and, involving as it did incessant journeys with insufficient means across the Continent to stay in underheated spas, villas and pensions, what I would describe as pure, first-edition misery. Everything she did aggravated the affliction that was killing her. She never had enough money to live at a level where an interest other than literature might have distracted her. She fed her imagination with the bright red blood of nobly dying Keats and nobly dying Chekhov and she wrote a stream of wonderful letters—alternatively devoted, reproachful, tormented—to Murry in England, which apparently increased his sense of her as a burden, while he philandered with other women, made excuses for not being with her for even a weekend and wrote in return a lot of guff about the spiritual growth *he* was experiencing from the phenomenon of *her* approaching death, and how it was improving her art. The latter is grimly true; she wrote her best stories in the nick of time, even as she moved in a contracting circle.

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At the end, like an alarming number of intellectuals or artists of the time, she abdicated from whatever reason she had acquired, after trying a last equivocal engagement with reason of which even Murry disapproved, submitting to the ministrations of Ivan Manoukhin, a Russian emigré in Paris who had formulated a treatment of tuberculosis by irradiation of the spleen with X-rays, for which he claimed 8000 successful applications (in Russia!).[3] The treatment was dangerous, it was ineffectual; K. M. reacted to it with agonies of burning and attacks of neuritis. For the moment, its only positive result was that a concerned Murry rushed to her side in Paris where they spent what sound like the happiest days they ever had together. Soon, they agreed to separate for all time and they lived apart during the last six months of her life. After Manoukhin, the occult resort; she embraced the mystical doctrines of a Scot named Wallace, author of a work, *Cosmic Anatomy*, in praise of psychic control of the body's ills, which had been sent to Murry by A. R. Orage, a theosophical supporter of Ouspensky and Gurdjieff. Murry found it abhorrent (yet typical of his irresolute nature he was very soon reading occult literature himself). K. M. was fascinated by it and it led her to the Gurdjieff Institute at Fontainebleau in October, 1922, no longer expecting a medical cure but ostensibly hoping that if she assimilated certain doctrines of transcendence she wouldn't need a cure; the tubercular bacilli would vanish. She had finally encountered her dominating male. By January, 1923, she was dead.

Gurdjieff (George Ivanovich) had once founded an Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man, in Moscow, but he was thrown out by the October Revolution which had the prerogative for Harmonious Development! An Armenian Russian, born near Mt. Ararat (left there by the Ark, no doubt), he had studied a potpourri of Eastern rituals and doctrines and, says Meyers, "was even rumored to have been a Grand Lama as well as the chief Russian secret agent in Tibet. He shaved his head, wore an astrakhan hat and looked like a cossack out of Gogol's *Taras Bulba.*" He was now established in La Prieuré, once a Carmelite monastery owned by Mme de Maintenon, purchased for Gurdjieff by Lady Rothmere, wife of the English newspaper owner. The whole damn program at La Prieuré was a crackpot mixture of messianism and fundamentalist self-programming, much like the present rage for gurus, group therapy and/or Jogging Instead in America. The aim of Gurdjieff's treatment was "the development of the innate faculties of its members by first breaking down the artificial barriers of their personality and then by developing and harmonizing their various mental and physical centers, the means of doing this being self-observation. . . ." You can take it from there. All this Woody Allen self-reconstruction took place in "a rather theatrical imitation of a Russian peasant village, complete with embroidered blouses, wooden shoes and exotic drinks, like kumiss and kiftir" (Meyers). After dinner everyone gathered in the salon where they listened to tambourine and drum music—around a fire, of course!

[3] According to Meyers, between 1914 and 1922 K. M. consulted twenty doctors. It is doubtful that she followed any concrete advice, for she wanted desperately to believe that her ailment was not corporeal and could be cured by other than clinical means.

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Alpers defends Gurdjieff, asserting that he was neither charlatan nor exploiter but a well-meaning therapist. "A man who lays bricks and planes wood, cuts out dress materials and printing stencils, designs all the decorations of a 'holy place,' mends Oriental carpets and picks up a little shredded cabbage in the kitchen is something else." I submit that those accomplishments do not prevent a man from being mad as a hatter. Yet Alpers contends that Gurdjieff 's accommodation of K. M. was kindness to a dying woman. What sort of kindness is it that demands of a TB in her last stage that she light a fire with kindling at 7 a.m. and wash in ice-cold water? The precise circumstances of K. M.'s last days are anyway reported disparately by Meyers and Alpers. Meyers claims that K. M. did *not* wholeheartedly accept the "discipline" Gurdjieff imposed by confining her to hard labor, poor diet, little sleep, cold rooms and hours of breathing in the fetid exhalations of a cow-byre. She confessed to Murry, in the few hours they were together again, that "she had as a result been on the point of collapse." Murry himself made this claim; if it was false, Alpers nowhere corrects it and he normally double-checks Murry. In fact he suppresses any suggestion that the Gurdjieff regime was at that hour fatal to K. M. On January 9th, 1923, Murry came to Fontainebleau at K. M.'s invitation, to attend the new theater on Russian New Year. At ten in the evening, running up the staircase before him to her bedroom, K. M. suffered the fatal hemorrhage and virtually died before his eyes.

To be sure, it is not plausible to maintain that she was murdered by Gurdjieff. One might equally pronounce that she was killed by Murry because he didn't more affirmatively urge her years before to enter a sanatorium—or that in the long run she killed herself. I think her case has been consummately put by E. M. Cioran, not writing about *her*, of course, but on the generic situation (in "Encounters with Suicide").[4]

> You kill yourself only if, in some respects, you have always been outside of it all. . . . You are not predisposed, you are not predestined to suicide, you are committed to it before any disappointment, before any experience; happiness impels you to it as much as misery does, even more, for happiness—amorphous, improbable—requires an exhausting effort of adaptation, whereas misery offers security and the rigor of a rite.

Poor creature!—against odds, against time and the worm, with desperate spurts of self-discipline and mercurial misgiving, she managed—just managed—to write herself into the history of English literature. *Requiescat in pace.*

[4] *The New Gods*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Quadrangle, 1976).

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DAVID KUBAL

Fiction Chronicle

THAT WE STILL WORRY about the survival of the novel suggests how much we continue to look to it for the experiences of moral order, autonomy, and romance. At times, at least, the contemporary novel fulfills these needs and, what is more, reassures us that such wishes can be met in society, the field it takes as its own. And in the process of dramatizing coherence, individual possibility, and the pleasures of love, it also satisfies our curiosity about social reality, that devious antagonist. Like Yeats's Keats, readers of novels are pressed hard against the sweet-shop window, both covetous of the *luxe* society offers, and anxious about a life that befuddles and threatens them. We want to know, as Saul Bellow has said, not the news of the world—that we have in oppressive abundance—but rather the news of existence, and particularly of life in society. The novel will not tell us all, but at its best it can reveal what is unavailable anywhere else. Besides, it provides the advantage of distance, of remaining outside the glass. As the narrator of Barbara Pym's *Less Than Angels* concludes: "And how much more comfortable it sometimes was to observe [life] from a distance, to look down from an upper window, as it were, as the anthropologists did."

In part, it is just such a perspective, and the tone in which it is announced, a point of view consistently adopted by her narrators, that probably accounts for the fact that Miss Pym's social comedies are little read in America. Such a distant, mannered, and even snobbish voice may also explain why, after publishing six novels between 1950 and 1961, she was unable to get another into print in England until 1977—and that only after she was described by Philip Larkin in the *TLS* as the most underrated novelist of the twentieth century. Victimized by the raucous sixties, she became after the publication of *Quartet in Autumn* in 1977, *The Sweet Dove Died* in 1978, and the re-issue of *Excellent Women*, which first appeared in 1952, the most popular "read" of the lending libraries. All these are now available here. Yet to come are *Some Tame Gazelle* (1950); *Jane and Prudence* (1953); and *No Fond Return of Love* (1961). *Less Than Angels* was published by Vanguard in 1956 and is now out of print. That Barbara Pym (the *nom de plume* of Mary Crampton) managed to find a new audience, at least in England, was fortunate, since she died in January of this year at the age of 66.

Her most recent novel[1] to appear in this country, first published in England in 1958, and re-issued there in 1977, opens in St. Luke's Church on the feast of its patron, the "beloved physician," as St. Paul called him. Celebrating the feast and her thirty-third birthday, Wilmet Forsyth, the narrator and heroine, is indisposed, though not in body, and in need of

[1] A GLASS OF BLESSINGS, by *Barbara Pym*. E. P. Dutton. $10.95.

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care. Like Jane Austen's Emma, whom Miss Pym has in mind throughout the novel, Wilmet is not so much ill-used as unused; not so much tyrannized by her class, her bureaucratic husband, Rodney, and her mother-in-law, Sybil, as spoiled by them. A beautiful woman, always exquisitely dressed ("in pale coffee brown with touches of black and coral jewellery" for the Autumn feast day), Wilmet is childless, idle, and snobbish. She is also utterly unknown to herself, unable to imagine another life, and afraid to risk herself, even on the London 'buses, certain that any foray will be disillusioning. Bored, without training for a career, despising routine (she can't imagine how to run a household), she announces her "autumn plans": "to take more part in life of St. Luke's, to try to befriend Piers Longridge and perhaps even go to his classes. . . ."

Piers Longridge is her Frank Churchill. A sour, moody homosexual, a fact Wilmet never quite seems to grasp, he has taken a poor degree and now teaches Portugese in adult education classes. Fancying that she might relieve his unhappiness, she forces herself on him, hoping for the grand passion of her life, another fact she never really admits. Finally, in a scene of high comedy and sharp pain, exasperated by her attention and her naïvety, he confronts her with his secret lover, Keith (his Jane Fairfax), a Pan-like male model, and accuses Wilmet of being incapable of affection. It is the first time anyone has told her anything near the truth, and in response she says to Mary Beamish (her Harriet Smith), " 'sometimes you discover that you aren't as nice as you thought you were—that you're in fact rather a horrid person, and that's humiliating somehow.' "

It is in witnessing the courtship and marriage of Mary Beamish, an orphan and ex-Anglican nun, and Father Marius Lovejoy Ransome, a devotee of Pater, that Wilmet begins to perceive the possibilities of being useful in the parish and even of passion. Perhaps Rodney is not much of a George Knightley, but after she finds out he has had an innocent flirtation with his secretary, another Miss Bates, Wilmet sees him differently, thinking "I had always regarded Rodney as the kind of man who would never look at another woman. The fact that he could—and indeed had done so—ought to teach me something about myself, even if I was not quite sure what it was." The truth of it, which she is much too reticent to state, and which Miss Pym is too fine a novelist to interject, is that in refusing to acknowledge her own, or anyone else's sexuality, Wilmet has failed to recognize her society, including the parish of St. Luke's, for what it is—an erotic enclave of beauty and variety, both dangerous and enlivening. It is like George Herbert's "glass of blessings," full of the "world's riches"—"beautie . . . wisdome, honour, pleasure."

Miss Pym's view of society is certainly outdated, based as it is on the belief, to quote Diana Trilling, "that when we are implicated in society we are the more, not the less, likely to exist in all our personal variousness. . . ." For Miss Pym such variety depends on Eros, and on the cultivation not so much of the self, as on tending to one's little plot—or for her characters, their parish. But that is not the whole of the matter, for at the center of the garden exists, to use her metaphor, the "compost heap," where Pan peeps through the leaves. Even at church, one of the "excellent women," Miss Prideaux, wears a fur coat, "not cat or rabbit or any of the

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more expensive varieties, but something one couldn't put a name to. Wolf, perhaps, or some strange bushy animal shot long ago in those Imperial Balkan forests." In recognition of the Id, lines must be drawn, decorum observed, irony employed, and tolerance offered. This done, there remains enough *luxe* for anyone, as Wilmet discovers, to her great joy, at St. Luke's and with her indiscreet husband. If this complex and limited vision of human possibility, embodied in a subtle comic art, will not win Miss Pym a large public, it will delight and console those who live in parishes of one sort or another, as, if one thinks of it, nearly everyone does.

Virtue, won stubbornly and painfully at the expense of the self is the only consolation gained by Rhoda Taber, the heroine of Joan Silber's first novel,[2] a provocative fiction of considerable skill. Its theme of dignity achieved through self-sacrifice, has its antecedents, and, perhaps, its last expression, as the title suggests, in Dickens and other Victorian novelists. One thinks of *Little Dorrit* particularly. But even for the Victorian heroine, virtue was not its own reward. Love and marriage were. After her husband, Leonard, dies ten years after their marriage, Rhoda has neither, unwilling as she is to open her household or herself, except for one brief and unsatisfying episode, to others. Her refusal to be capricious or sexual brings about her bitter isolation, which, yet, permits her to make a character of austere substance. At the conclusion she is so stubbornly *there*, while, at the same time, undeveloped and innocent, so untouched by the experiences the modern imagination deems necessary to selfhood. Questioning all the current psychological pieties about fulfillment, Miss Silber demands and wins a kind of reverence for an anachronistic life very few any longer consider worth living.

In 1940, when she and Leonard marry, Rhoda makes a deal with the world: she will make no demands on it, as long as it requires nothing of her. She will tend to the household, to her husband and children, forsaking the "languorous craving" and variety. Unlike Leonard, a pharmacist, who "was interested in the unmapped possibilities—the dark side of the moon, that sort of thing," she chose the normal, "clung fiercely to the surroundings she had made for herself, the objects of choice." The tone of her house is one of "stiff stillness," not like her mother's, where the talk is of socialism and the Workman's Circle, and where Leonard and her mother "were united in their fine passion to elevate the ordinary." Protected from any direct effects of the war and the Holocaust, she lives undisturbed, and at least not unhappy, until she confronts the unplanned, the "core" of life, its physical tyranny. Nature, unconsulted, strikes, while the world keeps its bargain: her mother and Leonard die, and her incontinent and aged father moves in with her. Bereft, unable to accommodate the demands of post-war culture, she holds staunchly to everything her daughters mock her for, a life undesigned for happiness and pleasure, devoted to custom and domestic order. The novel ends, appropriately, in 1960, Rhoda's values superseded, her daughters' ascendant. What splendidly remains, as Rhoda herself sees before she dies painfully of cancer, is "Her own unremitting force of character." What is splendid about the

[2] HOUSEHOLD WORDS, by *Joan Silber*. Viking. $10.00.

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novel is its plain honesty, the way it dramatizes, without piousness or extravagant claims, the elevation of an ordinary life, not to "authenticity" or saintliness, but to moral dignity. It is itself an austere art derived from the force of character.

Anne Tyler has a slight cast to her eye, causing the ordinary world of her novels to tilt just enough to reveal its oddity. So skewed, the usual emerges full of humor and magic. This is particularly so in her remarkable new novel,[3] her eighth, in which she creates one of the most bizarre characters of recent fiction. A *luftmensh*, Morgan Gower is also, like Henderson and Herzog, part rogue, part paterfamilias, in search of the pristine. Oppressed by the accumulation of things, of seven daughters, a senile mother, a bereaved sister, and the Cullen Hardware store during a nineteen-year marriage, he yearns for simplicity, order, beauty, and romance. Another one of Rameau's nephews, who tricks himself out in various guises, while playing the roles of doctor, priest, white hunter, and Toulouse-Lautrec, Morgan desires, paradoxically, the honest, sincere life of Diderot-*moi*. He thinks he recognizes that life in the marriage of the young puppeteers, Leon and Emily Meredith, whose daughter he delivers, while posing as a doctor, one Easter Saturday in the back seat of his car. Not only does he covet the Meredith family because they create in their puppet fairy tales an ordered and symbolic art stripped of the superflux of reality, but he also envies their pared-down existence: "He liked to think that their bathroom contained a bar of Ivory soap and three hotel towels. Well, and Leon's shaving things, of course. But nothing else. No bath oil, talcum tins, acne creams, hairdryers, children's orthodentic appliances, mingled bottles of perfume swearing at each other, dangling bras and nylons and lace-edged shower caps. . . . He felt awed by the Merediths—by their austerity, their certitude, their mapped and charted lives. He let them float away untouched, like people in a bubble."

Gradually over a ten-year period, Morgan's obsession comes to center on Emily, who realizes that men "seemed to fix themselves to her—but not to her personally, she thought. What they liked was their idea of her." For Morgan, Emily, always dressed in a leotard and a wrap-around, embodies "the single point of stillness," which seems resistant to time and change, without any need for objects and goods. She, ironically, wants everything he appears to represent: the unpredictable, the spontaneous, and the warm disarray of family life. Convinced each has what the other desires, they are drawn together. Emily gets pregnant, and what she wants, when Bonny, Morgan's ex-wife, sends them the mother, the sister, and all her excess furniture as a wedding present. Like Charlotte Emory of Miss Tyler's last novel, *Earthly Possessions*, Morgan discovers that liberation is an illusion, that attachments and disorder are the conditions of existence, and, in a manner of speaking, that he is the earth's possession, not the other way about. If he is not entirely content with this truth, he more than settles for it, seeing, at the end, the world "as luminous and beautiful, and rich with possibility."

[3] MORGAN'S PASSING, by *Anne Tyler*. Knopf. $9.95.

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There is much more going on in this finely textured novel than I have indicated. Since it yokes the familiar and the magical, it suggests other levels of meaning, touching on the relationship between art and nature for one. But all that is best left to the explicators, who are sure to come. Now it is enough to recognize that Anne Tyler's unorthodox imagination transforms society, teaching the reader to see the delight existing there and in the family, resistant to the will though they both are.

It may seem ungenerous to find grievous fault in a first novel published so late in an author's life. Yet it must be said that Nina Schneider's is a book[4] whose informing ideas are ill-defined and morally dubious. To respond to the novel in this way is entirely appropriate, since, in its final intention, it is explicitly concerned with ideas and morality; although a difficulty arises when one realizes the novel itself rejects as invalid all available modes of judging these matters. For Mrs. Schneider's work, both in form and matter, is meant as a biological protest against the rational, critical mind.

But, first of all, it is a story, much too complicated to detail here, spanning the first seventy years of this century, of Ariadne Arkady née Azzair, the narrator, and her life in a "prologue" as a daughter, wife, mother, mistress, and grandmother. The novel ends with an epilogue. She has missed out, apparently, on "real" life, or on individual fulfillment at any rate. Like the mythic Ariadne, she is both a vegetation-goddess and a seeker after the thread that will lead her and mankind from a labyrinthine prologue, a civilization made by male intellect, destined to guard against the Dionysian and the female. The drama is succinctly represented by Louise August's painting on the dust jacket: two patriarchs are studying a chessboard, pulling at their beards, ignoring a bejewelled, masked, and bored woman, who looks on, while a reddish moon rises in the background. On the board, which has been cleared of pawns, the King and Queen are sad clowns, the Bishop a death's head, and the Knight a unicorn. The sands of the timers are running out.

The missing thread for Mrs. Schneider's Ariadne consists of biology, "Implacable physical reality," and an art of "unpremeditated arrangements" that imitates nature. "For years," as she says, "I labored at formal gardening; I enjoyed my chessboard enclosures." Now she "aspire[s] to models of spontaneity, in effect to paradise gardening." Such a garden is "The perfect Happening. The look of noninvention, of spontaneity. . . . No matter how artfully created, its harmonies must appear to enlarge of themselves, a continuous becoming, a randomness that yet unfolds." The thread, then, is the novel Ariadne herself narrates, which foregoes chronology or any other logic of development.

And, yet, it is unclear whether Ariadne doesn't finally drop that thread, doesn't give up on the novel itself in the same way she has rejected the "chessboard," the old structures and forms, of civilization. Toward the conclusion she has grown, as she says, "Tired of trying to invent an order for simultaneity." And, so, as she addresses her grandchildren, "What

[4] THE WOMAN WHO LIVED IN A PROLOGUE, by *Nina Schneider.* Houghton Mifflin. $13.95.

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choice, my darlings, but to trust to the compost on the perennial bed?" Her search, utterly frustrated, comes back to some kind of primal maternal energy, which directs her, in the last act of the novel, to lead her hip grandson across the Canadian border, saving him from the draft and the Vietnam War. "History! Down with history," she cries earlier. And then directly to the reader:

> Call it castrating. I, a matriarch, say take the world away from men and give it to mothers for a while. It needs to be washed, put to sleep, so the bloody mouths, the trashed limbs, the shredded nerves may heal. Give the damn thing back to us who salvage coffee tins, preserve unripe tomatoes, conserve orange peel, as ants carry off eggs, because they are eggs. Stop the fighting. Stop the screaming, the crying. Put down your explosives. Everybody, into bed for a nap.

Such a "womb-cry" is not meant to stand the test of reasonableness. Because it is authentic, and all for life, it is self-validating. But that same wisdom is also justified when it decides on murder. Sometime later Ariadne feeds a solution of boric acid and formula to her infant, mongoloid grandson, who appears to her "like a pig foetus puffed up in formaldehyde." She believes she is within her rights, however, because as she tells her horrified gynecologist, " 'In my garden I thin out what comes up spindly, I snip buds, thwart excessive fertility by pruning.' " Such an argument and the mind which produces it are, of course, impervious to rational discourse and morality. Based on blood consciousness, Ariadne's ethic acknowledges no other imperative but survival. Mrs. Schneider's novel, like Terrence Des Pres's *The Survivor* and Lina Wertmüller's films, is then a part of the large claim now being made for biology and the nonrational. That these assertions, founded on a reductive notion of history and civilization, and forwarded without full consideration of their possible social consequences, should constitute the moral center of a novel of Jewish life is startling. Even more alarming is that the ideology is all too frequently regarded by the advanced segment of culture as a sign of health and liberation, and evidence of an enlightened morality, when it more accurately reflects, even at its most well-intentioned, a pronounced despair in mind and society, an acute illness of the spirit.

Shirley Hazzard's novel[5] is so conscious of itself as a work of art and of making important statements about fate and love that what begins as a fascinating story of the orphaning and dislocation of two Australian sisters, Caro and Grace Bell, and their sojourn in English society is submerged by ponderous significance. So, while this is a work of an accomplished craftsman, whose knowledge of how to make a novel is clearly demonstrated, its rewards are mitigated by an excess of artistic will. Besides, it is such a somber and unforgiving book: it lacks not only humor, but, more importantly, the basis of humor, an imaginative sympathy, especially for those pedestrian characters the narrator disapproves of. The most effective parts come early, when at the beginning of the 1950s Ted

[5] THE TRANSIT OF VENUS, by *Shirley Hazzard*. Viking. $11.95.

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Tice, an astronomer from the working-class, one of the new breed, approaches the imposing house of his upper-class superior, Sefton Thrale. Like a Victorian hero, "He was young and poor and had the highest references—like a governess in an old story, who marries into the noble family." There he meets the Bell sisters (the *nom de plume*, we recall, of the Brontës), and falls in love with Caro, the child of Venus. This is followed by a flashback in Australia, where the sisters are orphaned in 1939 when their parents drown in a boat accident. They are then placed in the care of their older half-sister, Dora, a repulsive stepmother indeed. At the center of the plot is Caro's "transit," her tortuous love affair with the playwright, Paul Ivory; her marriage to a wealthy American, Adam Vail; and concluding with her recognition of her love for Ted Tice. Fate, a quirky and a manipulated one, I think, gives the last twist.

Miss Hazzard's dialogue and exposition all too often crumble under the weight of the tragic theme. At one point, toward the end, Grace says to Caro, " 'At first there is something you expect of life. Later, there is what life expects of you. By the time you realize these are the same, it can be too late for expectations.' " And, at another, Adam Vail pontificates: " 'Our great and secret fear is that America may turn out to be a phenomenon, rather than a civilization. Hence, in part, the scale, the insistence, the need to prove the great mysteries obsolete or serviceable. We want our lust to be loved and called beautiful. To receive the homage due to love.' " These are only two of several instances when the characters intone rather than converse, or talk as if they were addressing the stars or a seminar. The narrator often speaks in inflated and portentous tones as well, asserting meanings that the story trembles under. For example: "Everything had the threat and promise of meaning. Later on, there would be more and more memories, less and less memorable. It would take a bombshell, later, to clear the mental space for such a scene as this." And: "In the restaurant, Ted Tice was watching Caro's lowered eyelids: the tragedy is not that love doesn't last. The tragedy is the love that lasts." And sometimes the author simply writes bad prose: "She had no unoccupied zone of objective feeling."

The source of all this forced seriousness is, I suspect, Miss Hazzard's fixed dislike of ordinary life. Of subway passengers, for example, we are told: "These might have been the founders of a new race that disdained expression and was indifferent to cruelty or compassion, or their own dis-ease." Or: Ted and Grace "moved together along the shop-windows, where mannequins in print frocks raised orange arms against tropical settings, in ecstatic, vital contrast to the waxen matrons lifelessly passing." If the devotees of Venus are incapable of compassion for anyone—and this includes most of the novel's characters—who fails to achieve ecstasy, then it is probably just as well they are inevitably thrashed by fate.

In Ann Beattie's second novel[6] fate is gravity, and her theme is the suffering of those who live under its law. Her text is Auden's "*Musée des Beaux Arts*," where suffering "takes place/ While someone else is eating or opening a window or just walking dully along. . . . " Yet, unlike Miss Beattie,

[6] FALLING IN PLACE, by *Ann Beattie*. Random House. $10.95.

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Auden believed suffering could be relieved and gravity escaped occasionally. And he could also express affection, praying in that exquisitely moving lyric, "Lullaby," for his beloved:

> Noons of dryness see you fed
> By the involuntary powers,
> Nights of insult let you pass
> Watched by every human love.

In this, Miss Beattie's summer novel, the concomitant to *Chilly Scenes of Winter*, there are no "involuntary powers," no instincts, much less love, available to invigorate the "Noons of dryness." Dehydration is a permanent state, where the only relief comes in continuing your lover's cocoon dream, or in wishing for "a house full of lights and music and people, a house full of constant activity, while outside snow fell silently, mounds of wet, silent snow, covering bushes and piling on roofs, rising as high on top of the hanging bird-feeder as the feeder itself"; or in carrying a robin's egg of "indescribable blue" to one's mistress. All these images are apt, for Miss Beattie is writing a modern *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, where versions of the womb and childhood are also preferred to a passionate, adult world.

In view of this, it is difficult to understand what attracts her many admirers. Certainly, her aesthetic surfaces are coolly brilliant, and there are scenes in the novel possessing the same kind of cogency her best short stories have. The chapter in which John Joel and Parker, two children in the novel, go to the Segal Show is particularly powerful. But the effective scenes and the pyrotechnics of her style aside, her fiction conveys little sense of what it is to be a child, or a parent, or a teacher, the kinds of characters which interest her; nor does it render the real difficulties and pleasures of the world. If one formulates a theory to explain her popularity on the basis of Christopher Lasch's analysis of culture, one can argue that her fiction confirms the feeling, especially among the young, that the public world is indeed insane and banal, and that one is only safe in cocoons and communes populated by one's own kind. It also sanctions the loss of affectiveness, making it seem normal; makes it all right to be without compassion, anger, lust, and fear, while approving an occasional sentimentality, a grace note upon which the novel unconvincingly ends, to serve for passion.

Still, Miss Beattie wants us to pity her characters. This one is willing to do, in the same way one feels sorry for sick children. But one demands from her more than a symbolic fiction about narcissism, which carries the implication that such a neurosis is the only truth about Americans under forty. Her vision (and the word is an overstatement) and style, despite its uniqueness, reveal a morally dead world from which a large part of reality has been withdrawn. Her decision to reduce the world constitutes an aesthetic failure; for art has the function to tell fresh and complex truths that do not encourage the reader to settle for the stale, simple ones that rationalize the meager in him.

The loss of childhood, along with the pleasure garden provided by the

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mother, is the unifying theme of Arturo Vivante's book of interrelated stories,[7] all of which were first published in *The New Yorker*. His art is a careful, even an exquisite, one, rigorously disciplined lest the emotions, always threatening to the characters or the narrator, should force their way out. The only impulsive act of the book comes in the brief title story, when the narrator (he is sometimes the center of consciousness in the other stories), Giacomo, the middle son of a Jewish-Italian family, who is now living in America, runs to a waterfall while on a visit with his wife and daughter in Puerto Rico. His caprice is rewarded by the re-capturing of power and feeling, associated with his childhood: "flushed and recovering my breath, I felt so much like a boy it seemed strange to have a wife and child there waiting for me. Even the car looked strange—could I be old enough to have a driver's license? Perhaps I would never feel so young again. That run to the waterfall had shaken off my shoulders more than twenty years." His punishment is the sharpened sense of how far he has come from his first home: "I turned the car around, and immediately I felt old again. Thirty-nine. Past thirty-nine."

If this kind of nostalgia, together with the lament for his childhood, constituted Giacomo's only emotions, and the book's only drama, then these stories would not give one much pause. What saves Mr. Vivante's work from mere melancholy, at least in the middle, is a series of three stories—"At the Dinner Table," "The Soft Core," and "The Bell"—in which Giacomo and his dying and widowed father battle to an inconclusive end, engage each other with spite, vindictiveness, and even hatred, the head of the household being the prize. But if there are new wounds inflicted, there are also moments when their mutual love is recovered, discovered below the layers of accumulated disappointments and betrayals. In "The Soft Core": "Strangely, now Giacomo found that he *could* talk to his father, easily, affably, and with pleasure, and that his voice was gentle. When his father was well, he couldn't, but now he was reaching the secret, soft core—the secret gentle, tender core that is in each of us. And he thought, *This* is what my father is really like; the way he is now, that is his real, his naked self. . . . His other manner was brought on by age, by a hundred preoccupations, by the years, by the hardening that comes with the turning of the years."

These three stories constitute a real achievement. They are honest in their portrayal of the animosities that exist and persist between all fathers and sons, and unsentimental about the unspoken love that also occurs between them. But Mr. Vivante's success is not only aesthetic; it is also moral. To give testimony to the inescapable bond between father and son, made up as much of love as of hate, is to recognize a human fact slighted in modern fiction. In this regard, he joins John Updike in *The Centaur* and Theodore Weesner in *The Car Thief* to dramatize and to insist upon a truth we need to recall.

In Stuart Dybek's first book,[8] a group of eleven uncanny stories about childhood and adolescence, we encounter a world radically different from

[7] RUN TO THE WATERFALL, by *Arturo Vivante*. Scribner's. $8.95.
[8] CHILDHOOD AND OTHER NEIGHBORHOODS, by *Stuart Dybek*. Viking. $9.95.

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Miss Beattie's or Mr. Vivante's. It is the Southwest side of Chicago during the 1940s, fifties, and sixties, a Slavic neighborhood gradually being overtaken by Blacks and Spanish. It is also a harsh and repulsive section of the city, which the author's singular imagination nonetheless enchants, transforming it into a world of magical grotesques. With its antecedents in Russian, and, perhaps, in Yiddish literature (one is sometimes reminded of I. B. Singer's stories), as much as in Sherwood Anderson and James T. Farrell, his fiction treats Ragmen, who hold strange rituals on the outskirts of town on Sunday after Mass; an old *buzka*, the Cat Woman, and her crazy grandson, Swantek, who drowns kittens and hangs them on the clothesline to dry; Budhardin, who returns to the neighborhood inside a mechanical elephant to revenge himself on the parish church; and, the oddest of all, "Uncle" and his apprentice, who scour the highways of Cook County for dead animals to stuff and sell to restaurants. But it is not only the trolls and ogres of the city that haunt one. It is also the gruesome sights, such as the one of the fat Puerto Rican woman tied to a telephone pole by drunks on a Saturday night: " 'Help,' she said in English. She didn't yell, she hardly said it, just kind of formed the word with her lips, looking straight at him with terrified made-up eyes. One of the men kicked her when she said it. It wasn't a violent kick—he brought his foot up like a punter into her breast, which lopped up and hit her in the chin." The smells of the Chicago neighborhoods linger too—of "cat sexuality" on hot summer nights, of whiskey vomit, and of blood and sauerkraut soup.

Moments of beauty are rare. In the first story, "The Palatski Man," Mr. Dybek does describe the marvel of a girl coming into puberty: "She ran from the window to the mirror and looked at herself in the dark, feeling her teeth growing and hair pushing through her skin in the tender parts of her body that had been bare and her breasts swelling like apples from her flat chest and her blood burning, and then in a lapse of wind, when the leaves fell back to earth, she heard his gold bell jangle again as if silver and knew that it was time to go." Still, growth, for the most part, is agonizing, surrounded as the children are by ugliness and putrefaction. And so, predictably enough, in the last story, the Uncle's apprentice, a figure of the young artist, stands on top of a railroad bridge gathering pigeon eggs, and as the bridge opens to let barges pass, "Warning bells clanged. Finally the boy raised his arm. Through swirling birds he waved good-bye."

The artist's flight from his city on waxen wings has become, of course, a mere conceit in modern fiction, especially in first books. It is a tired convention, too easily fallen into, and should be abandoned. Besides, in Mr. Dybek's stories of vigorous and brilliant unconventionality such a scene pales. It is all part of the modern writer's urge to mythologize reality, discontented as he is with the weightiness of the familiar. To be always trying to see through the world and to elevate it to spiritual significance is to chance missing what is so splendidly there. This may account for the fact that Mr. Dybek's characters experience so little joy or sensuous pleasure and that family life is almost totally absent from the book. The im-

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pressive exception is the story "Sauerkraut Soup," in which the narrator lovingly and straightforwardly tells about working in an ice cream factory, about the old immigrant workingmen, and about eating the soup, a magical ritual. If Mr. Dybek's first novel, which his publisher informs us is underway, deals with this kind of experience, it will also be well worth reading.

John Gardner has never really trusted the literary traditions of realism and naturalism. While his first work, *Resurrection,* is more or less along these lines, his finest achievements, *The Wreckage of Agathon* and *Grendel*, are both "sports," the first a comic, historical memoir, and the second a psychological version of the Beowulf saga. His more recent fiction is a mixture of various modes, introducing myth, fairy tales, and the "novel" within the novel. His new book[9] is made up of a fable, "King Gustav & the Devil," about sixteenth-century Sweden in which a Knight, Lars-Goren, pursues and slays the Devil. It is preceded by a sixty-page prologue, the most entertaining part of the book—the beginning, it would appear, of a gothic, academic novel. There Professor Jack Winesap, an up-to-date visiting lecturer (on "The Psycho-politics of the Late Welsh Fairytale: Fee, Fie, Foe—Revolution") at the University of Wisconsin, meets an "authentic though uncivil" historian, Sven Agaard and his "authentic" monster son, Freddy, who is hidden away in an attic in his father's spooky house. At the end of the prologue, late at night Freddy delivers his manuscript, the aforementioned fable, to the snowbound Winesap.

It is all very promising. But Freddy's tale, which completes Mr. Gardner's book, fails to develop as anything more than a modernist attack on rational, liberal humanism, particularly the variety that denies monstrosity and evil as well as heroic virtue. That is puzzling since Mr. Gardner has proclaimed himself to be a militant anti-modernist in *On Moral Fiction.* Yet as one reads the fable, one thinks of T. S. Eliot's essay on Baudelaire, a central document in modernist scriptures, in which, we were told, only the existence of evil makes possible the good; and only those who do evil or good are human. Mr. Garnder's version of the past also shares something of Eliot's notion that history made a wrong turn during the Renaissance, when the Protestant Reformation introduced individualism and, eventually, democracy. There is, besides, in the fable and prologue an unbecoming anti-intellectualism, or at least a prejudice against the democratization of mind, another of modernism's elements. For Mr. Gardner, apparently, the printing press is the great mistake of recent centuries, because it allows writers to make "literature" and politicians to distribute propaganda. There is also a touch of Primitivism. The Lapps, among whom Lars-Goren tracks down and kills the Devil, are the last noblemen, "real people, living at the extreme." And there is Bishop Brask, the resident intellectual, a more vigorous Jack Winesap, who can see both sides of any issue and who tells Lars-Goren: " 'How fine the old viking carvings are, or the primitive statues of Africa, or the square-cut tomb of King Edward the First of England. . . . But then great cities rise, artists grow

[9] FREDDY'S BOOK, by *John Gardner.* Knopf. $10.00.

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wealthy, their vision grows confused and complex. What a pity! Irony comes in. Paradox. Soon the only powerful emotion artists feel is nihilism.' "

In *On Moral Fiction* it is nihilism and its servants (William Gass, John Barth, Donald Barthelme, Kurt Vonnegut, et al.) who are the Devil in their refusal to "affirm, comfort . . . , and make it stick." In his criticism Mr. Gardner is for the Good, the True, and the Beautiful. He is also for the dialectical. Yet it is precisely those humanistic aesthetic and moral values which are not affirmed in *Freddy's Book.* Rather he posits the brute power of Lars-Goren, the Lapp's oneness with nature, the cynicism of Agaard, and the authenticity of Freddy's monstrosity and his simple fable. Complicated moderns are either liberal-minded fools, like Jack Winesap, or self-annihilating intellectuals, like Bishop Brask. Since the Renaissance, moreover, history has been disastrous; for after Lars-Goren cuts the Devil's throat, comes the death of God, leaving, in the last words of the book, "no light anywhere, except for the yellow light of cities." Now Mr. Gardner is not by any means the first writer to have difficulty bringing together his criticism and his art. Eliot's work, in fact, reveals a similar paradox, which may demonstrate just how much artists are creatures of culture. Mr. Gardner, at any rate, hasn't told us anything we haven't been used to hearing in our literature, "modern" as it is, for a good long time now.

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GEORGE KEARNS

Guy Davenport in Harmony

STORIES, GUY DAVENPORT CALLS THEM, so they are stories.[1] Yet none of our usual senses for "story" suggests the combination of audacious invention, sentence-by-sentence surprise, playfulness and archaic wonder of the world Davenport began mapping out in *Tatlin!*[2] and continues to explore in *Da Vinci's Bicycle.* We may take story, says the OED, as an aphetic of history, and then recall that before history became social science, or even a "continuous methodical record," it was a "knowing by inquiry, an account of one's inquiries." Davenport inquires widely, among familiar things seen or positioned freshly: Nixon in China; Stein in Paris; Mussolini's posturing rhetoric; the prehistoric paintings at Lascaux and Altamira; Picasso's *Guernica*; and among things half-forgotten or likely to lie outside our field of vision: Balbinus, poet and briefest of emperors, speaking to us from a jug; the liberated and liberating imagination of Charles Fourier; Robert Walser, Swiss writer who spent twenty-seven years of self-imposed exile in mental hospitals; the anthropologist Marcel Griaule listening to the harmonies of Dogon cosmology; or Joseph Nicéphore Niepce making, in 1816, the earliest known photographic plate ("Geese walking back and forth across the barnyard erased themselves during the long exposure."). The results of his investigations invite us to participate in plotting connections among points on a multi-dimensional mapping, while Davenport fashions them into a stylish world of pleasure, offering nothing less than the possibility of paradise regained. It is not often, now that I am grown up, that I take such primitive delight in stories.

We may begin arbitrarily at any point on this map, this unpredictable Möbius strip, this time-warp where Herakleitos intersects with Niels Bohr and reminds us (*Tatlin!*) that *the same road goes both up and down* and *the beginning of a circle is also its end.* Begin with a minor "character," the photographer Jacques Henri Lartigue, who pops up ("Au Tombeau de Charles Fourier") surrounded by Dogon myths, but not too far from Wilbur Wright, Gertrude Stein, Beckett talking to Guy Davenport in a Paris café, Henry James observing Blériot descend from the first cross-channel flight (although what James saw "he did not bother to say")—and Da Vinci's bicycle. With luck, Lartigue has appeared before Davenport's foraging attention, and finds a place in his universe. In the frontispiece to a collection of his photographs, preface by Ezra Bowen, we find Lartigue himself, in 1903, a small boy in high button shoes, clutching a huge box camera, staring at us with a delighted, omnivorous grin. His image, abstracted

[1] DA VINCI'S BICYCLE: Ten Stories, by *Guy Davenport.* The Johns Hopkins University Press. $12.95; $4.95.

[2] TATLIN!: Six Stories, by *Guy Davenport.* Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974. Not long available (my copy was foraged from a remainder table for $1.00); someone should get it back into print.

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from the Bois de Boulogne and attendant female relatives, Davenport has meticulously reproduced in a drawing, which in turn forms an enigmatic ideogram with a horned totemic animal and a blond American ephebe in a jockstrap. If we are seeing things as Davenport invites us to see them, we understand at once his attraction to a six-year-old boy who wrote in his diary, having just been given his first camera: "Now I will be able to make portraits of everything . . . *everything.* I know very well that many, many things are going to ask me to have their pictures taken." A mind that hears *things* speak, and for which, as Bowen comments, "anything was fair game—so long as it was pretty, exciting or fun."

Lartigue's pictures, images from and for a terrestrial paradise, include many of what he called the "magic adventure" of flying: kites, gliders, primitive flying machines—as well as bicycles. The Wright brothers came from a bicycle shop, making the imaginative leap that Leonardo missed, intent as he was on birds, and we are now in several worlds at once, returning to that first bicycle of 1493, crudely sketched by the master's ten-year-old protégé and buried from sight until our own time. Lines reach out, suggesting complex codes beyond chronology, structures that shift and glimmer, get charmed by passing gods ("Persephone stood at all the angles of time"), making us wonder at times if we have seen what we think we have seen. Lartigue went on taking pictures over a long lifetime, but did not show them publicly until 1963, a solitary persistence of vision unconcerned with the rewards and demands of civilization (in Fourier's damning sense of the word). That persistence, too, would appeal to Davenport, whose characters, he says, are "pioneers of the spirit" and have the "instinct to forage."

Davenport himself is prime forager among them, crafting glorious *bricolage* out of their provisions for the life of the spirit, communicating, with the help of dizzying parataxis and continuous subversion of our expectations, the sheer verve of his and their pragmatic intelligence. Almost twenty years ago he compiled examples of *The Intelligence of Louis Agassiz,* the Swiss-American naturalist who scorned, in brilliant and loving detail, the materialistic science of his time, then marching hand in hand with Fourier's civilization. For Agassiz, "the connection of all the known features of nature into one system exhibits thought, the most comprehensive thought, in limits transcending the highest wonted powers of man." Davenport's foragers have all intuited at least a portion of a holistic universe to which familiar categories—mind/matter, myth/history, fact/fiction, sanity/madness—are no longer a helpful guide, a universe whose irreducible particularity forms a complexity forever resistant to system and generalization. (As Wittgenstein came to see: he appears in *Tatlin!*, watching airplanes, an "engineer," not yet a "philosopher," in 1909; later, as a presiding spirit for the Dutch philosopher Adriaan van Hovendaal, a Doppelgänger of Davenport.) The foragers are shaped into a phalanx against all who believe that "the gods are indifferent to gravity. . . . Those who go to the inhuman to place their hopes upon its alien rhythms, its bitter familiarity with nothing, its constant retreat from all that we can love," making them "hostages to vastation" (Balbinus in "C. Musonius Rufus").

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Through his or her own *techne* each shares a Pythagorean vision in which, as the Dogon say, "a thing is an example of a plan"; they search out "the harmonies, the affinities, the kinship of the orders of nature"; they know that "all of nature is a series and pivot, like Pythagoras' numbers"—this is Fourier, for whom the Greek philosopher was *un prélat révéré*—"like the transmutation of light. Give me a sparrow, he said, a leaf, a wasp, an ox, and I will show you the harmony of its place in its chord, the phrase, the movement. . . ." They see with the eyes of a Leonardo, who has already forgotten his bicycle, and no wonder:

> He turned to the basket of flowering grasses, reaching for his silver pencil. Bracts and umbrels fine as a spider's legs! And in the thin green veins ran hairs of water, and down the hairs of water ran light, down into the dark, into the root. Light from the farthest stars flowed through these long leaves . . .
>
> —Maestro, Salai said, when will the chain [for the bicycle] be ready?
>
> —Chain? Leonardo asked. What chain?
>
> He drew with his left hand a silver eddy of grass. It was grace that he drew, perfection, frail leaves through which moved the whole power of God, and when a May fly lights on a green arc of grass the splendor of that conjunction is no less than San Gabriele touching down upon the great Dome at Byzantium, closing the crushed silver and spun glass of his four wings around the golden shaft of his height.

From which we pass in rapid juxtaposition back to civilization, Nixon and Kissinger bombing Laos and Cambodia.

But vertiginous vision is not an end in itself; it clears the ground of civilization's narrow sight, making way for edenic possibilities. Fourier, in whom discourse was never *happier*,[3] saw Eden as "a thousand documents and traditions attesting to the existence of a happiness vanished and lost, but which may stimulate *les modernes* to seek/rediscover (*rechercher*) another social order" (*Théorie de l'unité universelle*). Davenport's characters—modern or ancient, they are all contemporaries—holding fragments of these documents and traditions, meet in unexpected combinations within his paragraphs and sentences: "Butler is an intellectual cousin of Fourier. . . . Reason uncorrected by instinct is as bad as instinct uncorrected by reason. . . . Butler like Agassiz returns intelligence to nature, envisioning like Fourier a life that would cooperate with the instincts rather than deplore them." Within these stories, we need not wait for the new social order, a new discovery, or some distant system to be perfected. "Nature loves to hide," says Herakleitos in *Tatlin!* "The most beautiful order in the world is still a random gathering of things insignificant in themselves." On the first page of *Da Vinci's Bicycle* a Chinese official, fearful that Richard Nixon may be too enraptured with the Great Wall and the tombs of the Ming emperors, tells him that Chairman Mao has declared that the past is past. Nixon, having a hard time keeping up with the conversation, asks,

[3] As Roland Barthes says in his brilliant essay in *Sade, Fourier, Loyola* (1971). Translated by Richard Miller. Hill and Wang, 1976.

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"All over?" The stories that follow demonstrate that it is not all over, that the past is available for us to use now, soon. The direct reply to Mao comes on the next-to-the-last page of the book, in the mind of Robert Walser: "The past, I have known for years, is the future. All that has mattered is a few moments, uncongenial while they happened, that turned to gold in the waves of time."

Fourier called the evil Civilization, erected on bayonets and famine, false industry, the world *à rebours,* a hell of suppressed desires, almost lifeless: "The parades of the civilized are insipid with monotony. In Harmony they are infinitely varied." Writing with an assurance that Harmony will arrive, he oscillates in impatience and immediate imagination between the future and present tenses. Davenport is less sure that Harmony will come with time, although the escape hatch of language seems always within reach. Civilization's tragic rumblings are in the background. Nero's Rome, which shackles the philosopher C. Musonius Rufus to a chain gang. British justice, which executes one John Charles Tapner, whose grave is honored by Victor Hugo, himself in exile from the civilization of Louis Napoleon. Stalinism, crushing the false Soviet dawn in the mind of the artist-engineer Tatlin, crushing it so well that you will not find Tatlin's name in the index of the Great Soviet Encyclopedia, although in an article explaining the errors of Constructivism he is remembered as the designer of practical uniforms for workers. Mussolini, about to invade Ethiopia ("LA GUERRA SARÀ ASPRA E DURA"). Nazi planes above the Lascaux caves, whose paintings were produced "before Europe began to think in any way that we can understand." Banks, pitilessly remembered by Walser in his asylum. German hunters who shoot the last quagga, that animal Fourier had so counted upon. Civilization explains itself through the assassin of the visionary writer and politician, Rathenau: "*He was the finest man of our age, combining all that is most valuable of thought, honor, and spirit, and I couldn't bear it.*" Kafka weeps at the end of "The Aeroplanes at Brescia," not knowing why; but we know why: man's newly realized dream of flight is about to be co-opted by Civilization.

Central among Davenport's stories, his masterpiece I suppose, is the astonishing and erotic novella, "The Dawn in Erewhon" (*Tatlin!*), where his themes and many of his characters converge, as Adriaan van Hovendaal and companions of both sexes achieve a miniature up-to-date phalanstery of "amorous innovations" in the midst of the twentieth century. While Davenport's stories may be read separately, they offer their fullest pleasures when allowed to modify each other, as within a single field. Our pleasure is to watch characters appear, find themselves transformed and developed, take on different meanings as different minds pass through them. He will find, if he is lucky, a critic-anthropologist as sensitive as a Lévi-Strauss, but inevitably there will be duller explainers, term papers, panel discussions, dissertations. I imagine letters arriving in Lexington. Who is the tourist who observes the beginning of the twilight of the gods in the lovely "The Antiquities of Elis"? Answer: Pausanias. My library has nothing by Adriaan van Hovendaal, whose works, says the dust jacket of *Tatlin!*, are "some of the strangest of modern times." Where can I find

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them? Answer: Try the Erewhon University Press. In 1909, Wittgenstein was studying engineering in England; how could he have been present with Kafka and Puccini at Brescia? Answer: Does it matter? What religious assent must we give these stories? Answer: As Fourier said, the true tone of our relations with God should be friendship, and not belief.

Now is the time to read Davenport, before we are obliged to restore from criticism the innocence of his *ordre dispersé* (Fourier's cherished method of composition); now, for (Gertrude Stein on painting) "when everybody knows it is good the adventure is over." Adventures these stories are, in which the trinity of *delectet*, *moveat*, and *docet* move together in harmony. "But let us desist," as Robert Walser says, about to meet his fate on "A Field of Snow on a Slope of the Rosenberg, "lest quite by accident we be so unlucky as to put these things in order."

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JEROME MAZZARO

At the Start of the Eighties

HOMER'S INVOCATIONS OF THE MUSE are generally credited with establishing the poet's claim to divine inspiration, though by the end of the second book of the *Iliad*, Homer is warning his listeners that the gods do not always send truthful messages. By making the Muses the daughters of a not always reliable Memory, Greek thought strengthened Homer's warning, and the Romans did little to repair the situation by making Fama or Rumor the undependable mediator between man and the gods. As truth came to be less what enters from without than what methodology insures as repeatable and consistent, poets settled for credibility, and as Wordsworth noted, the poem became a fusion of deep and lengthy meditation "recollected in tranquility" by a "more than usual organic sensibility." Symbolist efforts to put the poem back in touch with a Storehouse outside of man through an "orderly derangement of the senses" soon dwindled into a search for novelty by way of *any* derangement of senses. Though endorsed by mathematics and popular culture, Oscar Wilde's personal call for art to press beyond the limits of credibility was resisted equally by high art. Instead, poets were persuaded that art is not an "escape from personality," as T. S. Eliot claimed, but its reverse—an expression of personality whose novel approaches and content rely increasingly on accident and chance. The adding of individual intellect and anthropological value to objects to accomplish this purpose set theorists again divining rationales and new sources of the non-egoistical advantages that poems continued to possess.

For James Dickey, whose poems consistently seek to extend human experience and credibility, the rationale is an outsiderhood associated in the title poem of *The Strength of Fields*[1] with Arnold van Gennup's concept of limen or *marge.* Located in rites of passage between separation and incorporation, liminality provides "a realm of pure possibility when novel configurations of ideas and relations may arise." Stripped of status, authority, and social structure, the individual becomes aware of an increase in sacred power which, in the 1976 Inauguration poem, he addresses and seeks to tap. What he seeks is a sustaining and even reversing energy in a world that otherwise matches Matthew Arnold's in bleakness. "Haunting the Maneuvers" images this bleakness in a meaningless dialectic which, in the tradition of Dante and Troilus, a recruit "killed" on mock maneuvers is forced to watch. Yet, as Dickey states in a translation of Yevgeny Yevtushenko's "Assignation," much as "it's *horrible* to live," it's "even more horrible/ not to live." "Exchanges," the 1970 Phi Beta Kappa poem, restates this "truth," using Joseph Trumbull Stickney's pessimistic view of California initially to reinforce the poet's vision of massive environmental damage and song of "moon and murder/ And Appalachian love" and fi-

[1] THE STRENGTH OF FIELDS, by *James Dickey.* Doubleday. $6.00.

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nally to lead the poet out of despair by advising him in the final line to "speak softly of living." Frequently, as in "Root-light, or the Lawyer's Daughter" and "The Voyage of the Needle," the "joy and glory" that make possible continued survival come from not always beneficial returns to nature.

Dickey's dialectical vision unfolds in a series of statements that gain intensity from shifts in literal and metonymic meaning, active to passive voice, and asymmetrical to paratactic construction. Such shifts require concentration by the reader simply to fix a text and combine with other energies released by shifts in formal stanza patterns, line gaps, and modified and projective fields. The emerging style is peculiar to Dickey and eludes egoism by sheer artificiality. No one could realistically talk like it; yet, while one senses the speaker is distanced from conflict, one seldom gets the impression that the style is mannered or mechanical. In fact, the style seems consonant with oppositions that are urgent and seductive and beyond human ken and control. In the book's translations where the dialectic moves from nature and man to *ur*text and Dickey, Dickey like Robert Lowell seems never to get beyond his own preoccupations. The best—"Purgation," "Math," and "Undersea Fragment in Colons"—accord with Dickey's own personal escapes. In "False Youth: Autumn: Clothes of the Age" and other of the volume's less successful poems, distance and outsiderhood come not from liminality or any difference in vision or quest for sacred power but from the outlandish clothes a speaker wears or the human skills he acquires. Here the discrepancies between manner and subject work against the rescuing of new truth. Though perhaps not so consistent as Dickey's best previous volumes, *The Strength of Fields* continues the various risks, advances, and collapses readers have come to expect from Dickey's restless and inquiring mind.

As venturous in its own assumptions is John Ashbery's *As We Know*.[2] Adapting W. H. Auden's moral sense of character as the consequence of the effects of individual choice to a view of self as "the raw material of the days and the ways that come over," Ashbery manages both a Stevensian moral contemporaneity in an "intimate union of the word and mind" and an escape from egoism by making others accept his unions as their own. The "truths" he seeks are, thus, like Wordsworth's, *inside*, in the way the mind takes in and evaluates. In this action, overt political and sociological statements give way to a sense of art's offering "certain beautiful forms" through which life may best realize expression. Modeling these forms on John Dewey's "contexts of experience," Ashbery offers a series of continuous, gradated fusions, including fringe responses, intermittently broken by analysis and discrimination and ultimately aimed at distinguishing poetic from ordinary apprehension. His stylistic antecedents are stream of consciousness, French surrealism, psychology, the writings of Gertrude Stein, and psychoanalysis, and in "no longer having any metaphysical reason" as control, the effort seems all-encompassing. Not only does "An idea I had and talked about/ [Become] the things I do" but "it is necessary to write about the same old things/ In the same way . . . / For

[2] AS WE KNOW, by *John Ashbery*. Penguin. $7.95p.

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love to continue and be gradually different." Impressions move so effortlessly that, were not Ashbery to emphasize the artificiality by novelty, convention, line breaks, willed repetition, and resolutions, readers might think the writing "so like life that no one can possibly believe in [its] probability."

"Litany," the volume's longest poem, offers the book's most complex artifice in a shifting dialectic of immediacy/abstraction, life/art, experience/reflection. Interplay occurs simultaneously across two printed columns and at times successively within a column. The form suggests stereo, counterpoint, or a split screen. The work is impossible to read through and incomprehensible as a simple "overhearing." It requires memorization of at least one part to make sense of the whole. Readers, therefore, are likelier to prefer the smaller, more conventional artifices of "Sleeping in the Corners of Our Lives," "As We Know," "Train Rising Out of the Sea," "Late Echo," "The Preludes," "Histoire Universelle," "Hittite Lullaby," "In a Boat," "The Configuration," and "Landscapeople." Often the major difficulty of these poems is tracking down antecedents for the various pronouns and occasionally discovering richnesses in their deliberate vagueness and ambiguity. Ashbery seems to derive this device of floating pronouns from Stein, but over the years it has become for him as much his own *trompe l'oeil* as the perspective of a convex mirror was for Parmigianino's *Self-Portrait.* Still, it is "Litany" that brings out Ashbery's full bag of tricks and establishes his claim to a rhetoric of thought every bit as distinct and interesting and original as that rhetoric of voice that gave such vitality to Cavalcanti and Italian poets of the *duecento.* Investing impressions with intellect and values through comparison, contrast, contiguity, and cause-and-effect, Ashbery achieves a poetic foregrounding that reaffirms Coleridge's stress on imagination as the poet's primary gift.

In Marge Piercy's *The Moon Is Always Female* and Galway Kinnell's *Mortal Acts, Mortal Words*,[3] Ashbery's interests in epistemology are reduced to interests in female and male consciousness. For Piercy, poetry becomes a masking or "lateral sliding" continually threatened by a "woman inside" and a lover's demands. Love presumably is a mutual wanting wherein both parties fight each other for their fulfillments, each wrestling to open the other up ("Arriving"). Individual poems, however, are likely to stress only the woman's role and anguish. "Excursions, incursions," for instance, describes a series of female/male encounters in which women are unwilling objects of sex fantasies, unwanted intruders into male domains, and betrayers of their mothers' dreams. Like its opposition of art and science, the poem is unsympathetic to male needs, programmatic, and conventional. Indeed, one gathers from these poems that, much as girls dress dolls, situations are continually adorned and readorned with apparel stamped not from Barbie patterns but from liberation cant. What Piercy wants ultimately is woman's choice—not only in goals and roles but also in childbearing. As a propagandist for these views, she may be excused for

[3] THE MOON IS ALWAYS FEMALE, by *Marge Piercy.* Knopf. $8.95. MORTAL ACTS, MORTAL WORDS, by *Galway Kinnell.* Houghton Mifflin. $8.95.

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being polemical, two-dimensional, and sloganish, and the exaggerated oppositions and repetitions of the syntax may be seen as stemming more from oratorical technique than lyrical form. Her poetry is best when she is opposing either her lover ("A battle of wills disguised," "Season of hard wind," "Apologies") or her mother ("My mother's novel," "Crescent moon like a canoe"), but one never senses that, as Stein claimed for poets, she has "ever felt anything in words." The poems are earned; the rhythms flat, more a result of workshops than of ear; and the words appear chosen for accuracy rather than joy.

Much as Piercy focuses on uterine politics, Kinnell harkens to works like Hans Blüher's *The Role of the Erotic in Human Society* and its "two basic forms of social organization, the family and associations of men." Divided into past and present in terms of families and associations, the volume sings "Joy and Death," since, as "The Choir" reveals, "even sad music/ requires an absolute happiness." Kinnell instructs readers how they may hear the "flutes" of their whole existence, "rehearsed by the sorrows, play [themselves] into total exhaustion," and indicates that, if one presses "love-flowers," these flowers "will lie/ between pages" for oncoming, slow-moving descendants. In poem after poem of Kinnell's "too mortal" world, sentiment comes to replace thought and cuteness, profundity. Friends are sentimentally celebrated, and Fergus, the poet's son, joins a long line of precocious and unbelievable children who seem more the consequence of Hollywood movies than precipitant discoveries. In "Fergus Falling," for instance, where shifts in perspective and an interplay of short and long free verse lines ably demonstrate Kinnell's continuing technical abilities, simple shaping of lines to the natural returns of syntax fails to provide readers with enough enticement. Inserting his own knowledge of Bruce Pond between his son's climbing and seeing (each repeated twice), Kinnell returns to that knowledge at the poem's close to appropriate what becomes a conventional fall/Fall for his own intrusive and "masculine" sense of work (sawing) and wish (angling). The "ancient hobo" of "Memory of Wilmington," similarly, never rises above the personal to embrace the cultural statements implicit in words like "rotting" and "falling apart."

Perhaps, as Kinnell insists in "Goodbye," an elegy for his mother, "It *is* written in our hearts, the emptiness is all./ That is how we have learned, the embrace is all." Yeats thought so, too, but he also thought enough of poetry to make it his embrace, emphasizing in the late works as escapes from personality strong rhythms and passionate syntax. Theodore Roethke and John Berryman followed him, and by filtering the female/ male relationships of "Fisherman" through a second persona, Kinnell shows his own awareness of needing to get beyond himself. The sympathetic interplay with name if not with nature in "Lava" adds to this awareness, and earlier poems like "The Homecoming of Emma Lazarus" show Kinnell can be profoundly sympathetic with and supportive of feminist aims. Nonetheless, in his praising—in his seeing what is and that it is good—Kinnell appears to leave out of this volume both women and Rilke's injunction to make out of that seeing what is at once the same and

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better. If, as Dickey insists, survival is an ongoing condition, the poems of *Mortal Acts, Moral Words* act not as temporary stays so much as distractions from the struggle. Despite the technical feats and a sense that Kinnell feels widely in words, the volume does not seem as fitted as Kinnell's earlier books to address the problems of the world and the great changes that need to be made. Able to elicit neither a social vision nor a concept of form more permanent or larger than its author, lessons fall repeatedly on moments too fragile or transient to bear weight.

G. E. Murray returns readers squarely to the issues of survival with his book *Repairs*.[4] Like Dickey, Murray feels that imaginations are not adequate to current problems, but he can see no limen or text where individuals may gain the necessary skills. The struggle is against both what "Night Crawlers" perceives is a hostile environment and "Rat Hunting" defines as wasteful sentimentalism. "Tigers" are repeatedly told not to become "lilies" ("Tiger on Michigan Avenue") because even the slightest relaxations in vigilance mean loss ("The Florida Elegies," "Sequels to an Uncollected Winter"). As if to emphasize that beauty and emotions must be devalued because they allow inroads to relaxation, imagery, subjects, and actions are kept wilfully unattractive and necessary. Even one's children in "Caitlin's Poem" and "Michael's Poem" cannot be dwelt on too long. Art becomes in "Invasion of the Muses" an alien force against whose "truths" "new surefire defenses will be available soon." Murray's language is always poetic, and for all their uglinesses, his "grotesqueries" are at times witty ("Shopping for Midnight," "American Cheese") and haunting ("New Orleans, October's First Sunday"). "Turning Thirty" and "In Memory of a Coastal November" show Murray's ease with traditional and free forms and less bleak subjects. Still, in the relentlessly grim struggle and absence of that excess of energy evolutionists once posited as the origin of culture, readers may contemplate whether the alert that Murray's depictions signal is itself adequate or accurate or enlisting.

Were it not for Laurence Lieberman's willingness to accept himself as a comic victim of his thirst for gratuitous experience, *God's Measurements*[5] might strike readers as being as one-sided in its acquisitiveness as Piercy's poems are in politics, Kinnell's in sentiment, and Murray's in necessity. The recklessness of "My Love Shooting the Buddha" or apprehensions of "Lockjaw" or details of "Daibutsu" or willed imbalances of "The Washroom Ballet" would be wrong in a vision that claimed direct access to divinity or more than personal and social truths. So, too, would the stanza patterns which, like the protagonists, seek repeatedly to crowd the Indefinite into definite limits. Taken from Marianne Moore or invented for the occasion, these stanza forms, by being true neither to syllabic counts nor to their implied balanced dialectics, further a sense of expectations which, though momentarily disappointing, are—like all comedy—finally pleasurable. Thus, in a poem like "Daibutsu," where the poet enters the head of a giant bronze god, climbing the steps much like a "foreign body" to take his place "in the Buddha's medulla oblongata," anticipated divine

[4] REPAIRS, by *G. E. Murray*. University of Missouri Press. $8.50.
[5] GOD'S MEASUREMENTS, by *Laurence Lieberman*. Macmillan. $6.95.

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truth dissolves into the truths of the poet's own memory, and the pervasiveness of these dissolutions leads to its own truth about the inexhaustible capacity of man to court deception, irrespective of the "high destinies" sometimes claimed for literature. In Lieberman's poems, a garrulous conversational tone, uncannily tuned to the human voice, accompanies these human rather than divine revelations.

"The Washroom Ballet" illustrates the volume's method. It begins descriptively with an imbalanced "Isaac and/ I," who are seated "side by side" on a "cement-/ slab ledge." The pair offer variations not only on one another as sound and son and father but also on the biblical Isaac and Abraham, and as the poem unfolds, its reductions, cleansings, and illuminations gain mainly from the religious parallel. Immediately, son and father oppose a reversed "dozen men/ and boys," who, in turn, confront an even less defined "others," as bathers are caught into an inhuman "patchwork" by their "doubling, quadrupling" mirror reflections. "Still others" emerge from the baths, "shyly hiding/ their genitals," having assumed, like Dante's purged souls, independent "slim rations/of cubic/ inches," and as the poem closes, Lieberman celebrates not the "truth" of the experience but a "magic of flattening." Consistently forced to learn "truths" from without—from objects, places, other people, events—the poems rely on descriptions that become evocative and cloying before distancing into illumination. Although one senses he has "earned" these illuminations through an accretive process, this is not so. Mirrors figure in only one section, and in "The Washroom Ballet," the illumination has little relation to the preparation, bathing, etc. Similarly, in "Daibutsu," the memory which seems to be the "effect" of entering the god's head is completely divorced from that experience. What are belated and chance awarenesses are, thus, given falsely causal shapes, and were the effect not an overexpenditure of emotion common to comedy, readers might rightly question the technique.

While not openly using poetry as a vehicle of knowledge, Isabella Gardner's *That Was Then* and Frederic Will's *Our Thousand Year Old Bodies*[6] strengthen critical commonplaces about differences in visible and invisible poets. Each exemplifies Longinus' advice that, in the place of divine inspiration, poets may use the truths of already existing works; yet, neither becomes sufficiently at ease with these works to construct new, strikingly whole and seamless visions. Gardner, for example, combines poems from her three previous volumes with a number of new lyrics to bring readers into a "high way" of living. The language and syntax of the early poems ideally illustrate a forties preference for the lexically correct word to natural idiom and "ideal" expression to verisimilitude. In these lyrics, echoes of Dylan Thomas ("Summer Evening"), Roethke ("Lines to a Seagreen Lover"), Auden ("Writing Poetry"), and Yeats ("Cadenza") occur, and readers may be wrongly tempted to sift individual poems for how fashions and major voices are absorbed and refracted. Readers may also

[6] THAT WAS THEN, by *Isabella Gardner.* BOA Editions. $12.00. OUR THOUSAND YEAR OLD BODIES: Selected Poems, 1956-1976, by *Frederic Will.* University of Massachusetts Press. $8.50.

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want to trace the softening of the forties ideals and public idiom into a personal voice based on Auden's syllabics in works like "Not at All What One Is Used To," "West of Childhood," and the volume's title poem. To do so, however, is to slight the original, lively, and intelligent perceptions that emerge in such fine lyrics as "The Compleat Anglers," "Gimboling," "The Accomplices," "At a Summer Hotel," "On Looking in the Looking Glass," and, as significantly, to choose technical accomplishments like virtuosity and attention to spoken language over Gardner's real achievement—inventive and infectious ceremony.

Will, likewise, betrays debts to contemporaries like Russell Edson, James Tate, W. S. Merwin, and Michael Benedikt. The vision he draws of a world becoming insensitive to language and wonder is a legacy of the sixties, and his "solution" in poetry's becoming an "underground" is part of a heroicism lingering from World War II or a variation on the "art of implication" that has characterized Russian literature since Pushkin. Divided into three sections, *Our Thousand Year Old Bodies* offers a surrealistic world supported by reportage and public and private prophecy. The volume's most interesting poems appear in the opening section where, as in "City," "At Times," and "Saturday Poem," repetition is used to undermine rather than reinforce, but as interesting is the way flat statements of the book's second section move suddenly into flatly stated strange occurrences, demonstrating how desensitized life has become to nature, wonder, and the adverse efects of technology. The villains of Will's world are no different from those of Piercy's, and it is a testament to her visibility that she seeks to confront them openly in her book. Will's political equivalents of wit-/ and dream-work insist for their worth on a preservation of the *status quo*, and when counter-programs are demanded, inadequate "returns to innocence" or "lightings out for the territory" appear. Often fresh images and uses of language dress these appearances, as Will takes to heart Hulme's valuing of fancy over imagination and Stein's dictum that poets "feel with words." In these emphases, his vision ably expresses the ontological insecurity, alienation, and anomie that scientists also perceive, but it offers little understanding of world crowding or the depth and length of the emotional and economic commitments that he would have immediately severed.

In contrast, Minas Savvas' translation of Yannis Ritsos' *Subterranean Horses*[7] suggests the value of tradition and the ease with which some European writers are able to bring fancy to bear on already existing truths through what Yeats calls "emotional symbols." The appearances of guerrillas, soldiers, buses, and policemen against established symbols of liberty set off the book's resonances of war/peace, pagan/Christian, ancient/modern, and nature/technology. "Change of Residence" confides that in living something is always left and "Meeting," that "nothing comes totally by itself." All life is relational, and mere coexistence conveys value. Even myth is recycled, as Eurydice in "Descent" is killed not by a snake but by three airmen who come out of an elevator with a suitcase contain-

[7] SUBTERRANEAN HORSES, by *Yannis Ritsos*. Translated by Minas Savvas. Biblos Editions. $30.00.

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ing her two severed hands and the poet's manuscript. Ritsos describes this recycling in "Reverent Comparison," pitting his poet against images of old women and dogs who rummage through the discard of the town for those rescuable items in whose cavities are heard both present and past. The action is repeated in "Story," where a wheel from an overturned bus is converted into "a crude hand-barrow" that is used to hawk oranges. In a world like Ritsos' which builds on the past and inherits, thereby, what Melville, Hawthorne, Henry James, and recently John Hollander see as "tales of the fathers," massive severings like Will's are unthinkable. The simultaneous palpability of culture colors perception and, as such, minimizes matters of novelty, adequacy, and choice, which tend not only to make American art abstract and intellectual but also to make individual artists liable for what each uses.

If salvaging truth becomes difficult in cultures which keep rebuilding and changing their pasts or accept annually the repetitions of natural renewal, Debora Greger's *Movable Islands*[8] demonstrates that it still can be done successfully. Greger locates her truths in attachments Americans make toward ideas, perspectives, and movable objects like books, paintings, and music. As discrete impressions converge to reflect a world whose meanings lie in accidental coalescings and reinforcements, "The First Movement" announces that not objects but the anthropological values added to objects are her poems' subjects. Events will be transported to "a halfway home . . . unmarked on the map" ("Crossing the Plains"), and in this realm of art some experiences will be told, others "never spoken of" ("Crossing the Plains") or spoken of "only to a third person" ("The Coloring of Experience") or even burnt like finished canvases in "a fire of dead leaves" ("The Painter's Model"). In that, having been abstracted, objects are free now to take one back or forward ("Letter to My Sister"), juxtapositions like Ritsos' occur. "Fall" reasserts that one can keep objects only by leaving them physically, and "Painted Desert" and "The Armorer's Daughter" show how abstracting devices like locus and myth give "a shape and a significance" to contemporary events. In "Painted Desert," a doorframe becomes the measuring device of distance and value, and in "The Armorer's Daughter," myth reacts against myth, as a father's need to transform a girl into his hoped-for son is opposed by the daughter's acceptance of herself as different.

Though perhaps not so encompassing as Dickey's or Ashbery's cultural visions, Greger's "halfway homes" are contemporary and exciting. They clearly exhibit sound and sense enough for accomplished poems, and the sense of their accomplishments extends beyond the present volume to Greger's potential as a poet. She knows that emotional attachments to abstractions are not themselves abstractions, and she wisely relies on technique and medium to appear larger than herself. Occasionally, as in "Pentimento" and "A Second or Third Dimension," she fails. Here the idea of pentimento remains more interesting than what she makes of it. Occasionally, too, as in "Painted Desert," her use of perspective is "conscious where it ought to be unconscious." Such reversals damage "The

[8] MOVABLE ISLANDS, by *Debora Greger*. Princeton University Press. $8.50.

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Coloring of Experience" by deadening the poem's freshness with conventional transitions. In her best poems, natural scenes and repetitions remain subservient to changing anthropological values and intellection. "Not You" and "To Make You Well" show a willingness to get out of her own persona, and her truths do not seem sexually slanted. Her potential lies in a willingness to probe the kinds of and reasons for abstraction that, for the moment, seem a necessary part of American art. Her allusions to Vermeer, Monet, Hopper, Flaubert, Tolstoy, Chekhov, and Beethoven demonstrate an existing basis for the probe, though the occasional allusions to Lillian Hellman and Charles Simic indicate that the basis may need strengthening. "Fall" and "The Light Passages" suggest, in addition, a laziness and a willingness to let the cutesy, the borrowed, and the shocking stand in the place of truths rescued from the eternal.

Norman Dubie's *The Everlastings*[9] begins with premises that are very similar to Greger's. For Dubie, all creativity is contemporaneous so that past creative moments serve to illuminate present as well as other past creative moments. His poems seek to make accessible this commonality by a series of abstractions that, like Lowell's translated *Koran*, add in their reconstructions the expected "camels." Repeatedly, Dubie gets caught up in his additions and slights his "text." Art becomes not the escape from personality that he begins with but its expression bound inextricably to time. In "The Composer's Winter Dream," one has, consequently, not Beethoven's sonata but details of the bustle "within the great house of Esterhazy," and in "The Land of Cockaigne: 1568," not Breughel's painting but the socio-politics of sixteenth-century Brussels. With such emphasis on what the artist shares—or does not share—with his time, one may alternately suspect Dubie's details of possibly being a way to lure readers outside themselves and dismiss the book as a confused muddle of detail. Dubie unquestionably clouds what Richard Howard's considerable skills as a translator and poet make seem easy in his volumes. At times, as in "Coleridge Crossing the Plain of Jars: 1833," Dubie, like Greger, proves less interesting than his source; and at other times, as in "Comes Winter, The Sea Hunting," he is too caught up in conventional imagery to say something new. But whereas in Greger's case, these lapses occur in "weak" poems, in Dubie's case they occur in his "best," and confirm even more strongly a sense of his needing to distance personality.

The Knopf Poetry Series gets off to a serious start with the printing of Robert Mazzocco's *Trader* and Cynthia Macdonald's *(W)holes.*[10] Both volumes share a skepticism about explicit long-term vision and already existing truths. In their place, each presents realms of conjecture whose verifiability by either fact or method is doubtful and whose command of belief Wilde makes the true basis of art. Like the traders of the title poem, Mazzocco's readers must negotiate things they are told exist inland and their exclusions from such places. Events occur not *as* but *as if* other events are occurring, and verifiability lies always beyond reach in unfin-

[9] THE EVERLASTINGS, by *Norman Dubie.* Doubleday. $6.95.

[10] TRADER, by *Robert Mazzocco.* Knopf. $8.95. (W)HOLES, by *Cynthia Macdonald.* Knopf. $8.95.

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ished sentences and uncompleted comparisons or, as in "Widow," in "the breath of ashes/ The wreath of stars/ Past the last stop at the emptying station." For man, there are ever the Symbolist's "two islands": "Between the dream of return/ And the dream of escape." One is inhabited and the other—"the island of the gods"—is uninhabited and nameless. Much as in Baudelaire's "Le Voyage," imagination becomes man's one adventure, though unlike Baudelaire, Mazzocco images the correspondences of flesh and the true as a series of narcissicistic and homoerotic encounters. Located not so much in the tropics as amid tropical images, the poems define their ambiguities in terms of the seductive and the oppressive, the repetitious and the enigmatic, the appealing and the forbidden. After a while, however, one tires of the *as if*'s and clings mercilessly to recognizable symbols like "the serpent's tail," which Mazzocco offers at the end of "Horoscope," as if these were the truths or new myths whose distances art will subsequently fill, sensing that if not new myths, Mazzocco wishes to restore by such symbols those realms of greatness that existing visions and truths deny.

Macdonald temporarily imposes upon her experience an all-embracing circus metaphor, and the metaphor proves as unreliable as Mazzocco's conjectures in penetrating to a satisfactory total truth. Indeed, the book seems to assert that all "wholes" have "holes" within them. The particular circus metaphor she adopts goes back to classical times and enters Christian thought with Jerome's translation of St. Paul. When the metaphor works well, as it does in "The World's Fattest Dancer," "The Siamese Sextuplets," and "The Lady Pitcher," it parodies both Hulme's sense that by metaphors and fancy language may be made precise and Stevens' "supreme fictions" as vehicles of perception. The strain on the metaphor to disclose by a kind of wit-work often ends, as do Piercy's poems, in grotesque costuming. "Burning the Babies," in its interplay of original and quoted material, attempts to present more directly Macdonald's sense of how life does shuttle between present and past, action and reflection, impulse and recoil. As she notes at the poem's end, conjecture seems to be less attractive these days: "We have stopped eating because the food burns our mouths./ We have stopped drinking because we cannot hold the water/ In our hands." "It is time," she suggests, "to look at the boxes," to reexamine premises, "to check the babies," and presumably, to come up with views that do not darken but have holes, like those William Carlos Williams gives to the imagination, for man to escape through.

R. G. Vliet's *Water and Stone*[11] draws its statements out of the simple polarity of life and death. "Passage" defines the dialectic in ten segments that show the insinuation of death beginning almost imperceptibly in infancy and growing stronger until, "after surgeons' knives," a reversal occurs and life battles for victory. Vliet takes to heart Ruskin's description of the soul's need "to *see* something and tell what it saw in a plain way" as "poetry, prophecy, and religion—all in one." He keeps his language

[11] WATER AND STONE, by *R. G. Vliet.* Random House. $5.95.

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spare, using metaphor to enliven perception and, as in the Noh drama which gives the book its title, wed recurrence to a form of repetition-compulsion. What man cannot face—and thus what he seeks continually to overcome by art and acceptance—is a helplessness in the face of death. The play recounts the efforts of Lee Benbow (Everyman?) to come to terms with his inability to rescue his drowning brother (Fellowman?) and a projection of that failure onto four bystanders who had not come to his aid. In movement, the play resembles "dreaming-back" dramas like Yeats's "Purgatory," but with fewer occult implications. Psychic repetition follows nature's repetition and her efforts to survive and overcome and "be gradually different." "Poetry (if it must come)," Vliet asserts, "must come never kept, / but unkempt and dragging weed/ up from the seas." The figure "breathing/ through the stain on Brady's photograph" is alive because it "never needed/ the camera's eye." Art's truth and being fix—like Macdonald's holes—on those "who do not grasp for them."

The reductions of poetic technique in all three volumes leave readers with fewer structural assurances that what they are reading is, indeed, poetry. All seem to accept Wordsworth's premise that the most interesting parts of good poems are "strictly in the language of prose when prose is well written" as well as more recent assertions that poetry differs from prose by refusing to dissolve into action and by being written in lines rather than in paragraphs. The smaller units of poetry increase verbal interaction so that poetic language tends to call attention to itself either by its interplay or by its fusings of perception and expression. The "thunder of shook/ sheets" in Vliet's "Salvos for Albertito" gains density, for example, from its placement among other descriptive lines and its echo of Hopkins' "shook foil," and precision from the way sheets snap when shaken. Thus, rather than dissolve like words in prose, poetic language "foregrounds," and like other arts at the moment, poetry tests this foregrounding by parody (Mazzocco/Macdonald) and reduction (Mazzocco/Vliet). Independent of this testing, these volumes also seem to bear out Erich Auerbach's insight that, as in the Latin instance, onrushes of parataxis accompany cultural declines, as arrangements that were once hieratic and differentiated fall victim to the omnipresent "and." Absent are the usual mortars that reveal intention if not intellect and anthropological value. Interchangeability increases, and although phrases of each of these poets still call attention to themselves, they do so much as items on a department store counter or parts in an assembly line. Words wait anxiously to be selected and cycled into differing and multiple systems.

Donald Davie's *In the Stopping Train* indicates that this tendency toward reduced style extends to contemporary English poetry as well, though for Davie's book as for Josephine Miles's *Coming to Terms*,[12] one can see the tendency as part of a larger desire to test the language's ability to treat emotions that are often ignored by unitary visions. For Davie, who praises

[12] IN THE STOPPING TRAIN, by *Donald Davie*. Oxford University Press. $7.95. COMING TO TERMS, by *Josephine Miles*. University of Illinois Press. $3.95p.

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his French teacher for giving him the language of Ronsard, conventional themes provide occasions to see "the whole/ Diction kit begin to fall apart," and the interest in his collection lies in the self-consciousness of his efforts to shun the "unlikely . . . enormous, louring resonant spaces/ carved out by a Virgil" and gauge his style to "small clearances, small poems." At times, as in "Father, The Cavalier," the efforts add up to nothing more than rhetorical adroitness—the withholding or the correct placing of a word. The work's final "mostly," sentimentalizing the photo, qualifies "unnoticed" but also echoes the assertion/qualification of the poem's second stanza—"A surrogate/ Virility, perhaps." "The Harrow" creates its tension syntactically by withholding the verb "stir." These techniques work well in the opening half of "Depravity: Two Sermons" and in "Bedfordshire" to bring irony to the conventions of occasional poems. Although in poems like "Morning," "To a Teacher of French," "Widowers," and "A Spring Song," Davie emerges with a live voice, readers may wonder whether there is not as much artifice in this voice as in one that strives for elegance, and if the reason for Davie's efforts is political rather than artistic. American readers especially may concur with the imagined reader of "A Spring Song" that "the sort of acrobatics that this poet/ Is good at, we can do without."

In contrast to the self-conscious style, conventional themes, and political intent one finds in Davie's volume, Miles does not openly call attention to her reductions or egalitarianism as she plays incidents from her life off against personal and public events. Foregrounding comes out of context, as the novelty of her subjects, natural affinities, and the objectivity of her reporting work against expected "poetic" echoes. Her interplays are not always successful, and in *Coming to Terms*, readers get a bigger proportion than is usual in her books, of sharp, well-written prose. Nonetheless, she remains an excellent poet to learn from. Particularly effective as poems are "Trip," "Luncheon 2," "Nadirs," and "Easter," partly because they extend traditional subjects. "Trip," for example, describes a train journey from winter to the sun of the Southwest. It plays freshly upon a long tradition and symbolism of journeys to self-discovery and salvation, and Miles's own, effective choices of new and old reaffirm Eliot's thesis of good poems being a composite of "tradition" and "individual talent." "Easter" deals with the time-honored theme of religion outlasting its modern paraphernalia. But the majority of the poems in the volume remain trivial and uninteresting, their "meanness"—to cite Wordsworth—not of the poet's mind but of failed intent. Miles makes Whitman's parataxis her own, adding to it her own warmth and richness and enlarging it to new possibilities. Relying on whim and chance for her impulses, she exemplifies Longinus' counterbelief to modern poetics that the quality of poetry comes principally not from words but from the differing intents words serve.

William Virgil Davis carries the minimalization of poetry even further in his prize-winning *One Way to Reconstruct the Scene*.[13] Section III of the

[13] ONE WAY TO RECONSTRUCT THE SCENE, by *William Virgil Davis*. Yale University Press. $3.95p.

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book, dealing with a mythology of "Bones," the "room" poems, and individual lyrics like "The Oxygen Tent," "A Late Elegy for John Berryman," "Snow," and "Property of Loss" demonstrate how successful one can be at the practice and attest to Davis' mature and individual direction. In the "Bones" section, especially, Davis shows that he can bring intriguing discoveries out of steady and repeated looks at the interplays of ego/flesh and soul/body. "My Son in Snow," "Driving Alone in Winter," and "The Sleep of the Insomniac" demonstrate, moreover, what happens if Davis loses concentration and puts undue weight on his "prose language" to carry lines. The disappointment resulting from unsatisfied expectations of interplay turns to sentimentalism or, as in other American gothic, to inadvertent comedy. There are occasional strong rhythms, as in the last lines of "After the Funeral," and even when the work becomes prose, as in "Another Night with Snow," readers have good prose: "The horses stamp the snow/ and snort over their shoulders. The heat/ rises from their haunches as my mother and I// watch them and wait." "The Weight Lifter" suggests an interesting concept of "lost time" as existing, much as it does for Proust, independent of the individual and in battle with imagination. By probing this concept and continuing to expand his references, Davis should be able to minimize his failures in future collections.

Frederick Seidel's *Sunrise*[14] makes overt the political implications of the cultural declines drawn by poets like Dickey, Murray, and Will and implied in the parataxis of Mazzocco, Macdonald, Vliet, and Miles. The volume repeats Toynbee's belief that nations decline when their leaders do not have imagination enough to solve the problems. Seidel places the beginning of the present decline at the assassination of Jack Kennedy and the end of the New Frontier. "The New Frontier," "November 24, 1963," "Freedom Bombs for Vietnam (1967)," and "Robert Kennedy" deal directly with politics and Seidel's discoveries that individuals now rot before they ripen ("A Beautiful Day Outside") and "The gun is mightier than the word" ("Robert Kennedy"). Here, too, readers meet "Ambivalences at a standstill" and the suggestion that the "innocence" of Kennedy's Eden "was keeping/ The common still asleep//While [the uncommon] overreached, and touched so easily/ What [they] were." At times Seidel relies on strong echoes of Lowell to begin poems ("Nothing is human or alien at this altitude, / Almost a drug high, one mile in the blue"), to get through difficult transitions ("We could love politics for its mind!"), to enliven rhetoric ("O to be sterile, and to rise and wait"), and to conclude ("Art won't forgive life, no more than life will"). "Pressed Duck" seems to owe entirely to the Lowell of *History*. Seidel can also be annoyingly academic ("Hart Crane Near the End") and lifeless ("To Robert Lowell and Osip Mandelstam"). Still, as he writes in "The Last Entries in Mayakovsky's Notebook," writers know the power of words, and like Antonioni in "Death Valley," Seidel is not beyond painting a

[14] SUNRISE, by *Frederick Seidel.* Viking. $12.95.

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desert to get his effects. Readers have only to turn to "1968," "Men and Woman," "Wanting to Live in Harlem," and the title poem to recognize the importance of Seidel's concerns and talent and be reassured that, although perhaps not now venturous enough, Seidel has the power to be an important visionary.

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GUY DAVENPORT

Imaginary Americas

OF SIR WALTER SCOTT'S ORNAMENTAL WATERFALL in the gardens at Abbotsford the Earl of Rokeby remarked that he could make a more respectable one from his own person. Peter Conrad, the English literary scholar, setting out to study versions of America (by which he means the United States) invented by various Englishmen who came here to find Utopia, themselves, the confirmation of their worst suspicions, Paradise, or the spearhead of technological advance, begins his analysis, as a warm-up for more thorough demonstrations, with a round of views of Niagara Falls from the sniff of Mrs. Trollope in 1827 to Bertrand Russell's blank stare in 1914.[1]

That sensibilities are predisposed to see what they want to see is the almost too predictable formula for precipitating the details of this lively book. Lively it is, as America is big and the English are accomplished observers and exiles with a purpose. There is nothing here of those travellers wholly unprepared for surprises. No Feisal of Arabia who, seeing his first waterfall (in Switzerland) asked politely of his companion Colonel Lawrence if they could remain until all the water had run over, no Sarmiento in Ohio in ecstasy at the towns and farms and well-behaved people, no Jardiel Poncela utterly appalled by California in the 1930s, no Marianne North having the time of her life (a sophisticated Alice in a real Wonderland) with Longfellow in Cambridge and General Grant in the White House, wondering in old age if both weren't a madcap dream.

The British have habitually chosen foreign places as scope for one crotchet or another (Arthur C. Clarke in Sri Lanka, Norman Douglas in Capri, Anthony Burgess in Malta). Peter Conrad is at his best with exiles like Auden, Huxley, and Isherwood whose visions of America scarcely correspond to anything at all, and who, with consummate eccentricity, made up Americas and lived quite imaginatively in them.

Conrad's approach to all of this is one of bright seriousness, an intellectual probing, a vigorous curiosity constantly turning up new information. His subject, helplessly, is so much the raw material of comedy that the glints of satire we perceive on every page shine alternately from Conrad's wit and from a ridiculousness innate in the careers being scrutinized. The psychedelic Huxley, a filthy Auden dabbled with snot and more than half-mad with buggery in his second childhood, Isherwood living in the upper reaches of the higher Hindu consciousness, Lawrence dithering about the phallic sunshine in New Mexico—they are a Thomas Love Peacock novel come true, a satire by Waugh, a set of Beerbohm cartoons, or Wyndham Lewis at his most outrageous.

It is all, however, quite real. These caricatures—men of genius, all—are

[1] IMAGINING AMERICA, by *Peter Conrad.* Oxford University Press. $12.95.

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exemplary experiments, a kind of pioneering in the spiritual dimension. In one sense, Conrad is analyzing America's reputation abroad by finding its sources in intelligent makers of opinion. Think of the many who know America from Céline's account of Detroit and Chicago, of those who trust Wells to know what he was talking about, of the good will between England and America created by Kipling. These articulate reports, however distorted, have an authority over rumor and *cliché.*

Jessie Whitehead, the daughter of Alfred North and friend of Gertrude Stein, once noted when she had lived half her life in England and half, until then, in the United States, that she preferred Americans because of their unfailing kindness. "What a boor Dr. Johnson would be at an American cocktail party." This is a clue to Conrad's choice of Englishmen in America: they were all outsiders in their own country, men of self-invention. They came here for the same reason that brought the Puritans, the Huguenots, the Anabaptists, and the Hassidim. Freedom from constraint and sanctions was not the only reason; Conrad is far more interested in the supposed America that fetched over his exiles, and in men in quest of something Europe lacked. Lawrence made up his America ludicrously out of the whole cloth of his lurid imagination.

Kipling was looking for a country in its epic stage of development, and proceeded to see America that way. *Captains Courageous* is a transparent hymn to derring-do, to sea captains on the Grand Banks and captains of industry. If America is also (in imitation of Europe) effete, we have heroic models to set us right. His novel discovers two heritages for an adolescent boy, one decadent (and significantly requiring a voyage to Europe), the other epic. Kipling tosses his protagonist off the depraved ocean liner taking him away from America, and has him rescued, re-educated, and remade by rough, manly fishermen.

Conrad spends a lot of energy studying *Captains Courageous*, and in his method inadvertently exposes the way he cuts corners and commits the very sin of his subjects in gazing with such raptness that he fools himself as to what he sees. He is particularly interested to take apart and inspect the scene in *Captains Courageous* where the tycoon Cheyne receives word in San Diego that his son Harvey is not after all dead, but has been picked up by a fishing boat and is safe in Gloucester. In his paraphrase, Conrad transfers to Cheyne actions belonging to his typist and telegrapher, as well as all the Chinese junks in San Diego harbor. Conrad rehearses the fine passage about Harvey's parents' transcontinental train journey, noting how Kipling is obsessed by facts and figures. (In America, by the way, we do not write $3,665.25 as $3,665¼, and in any case it should be, as in Kipling's text, $3,676.25.) Of Kipling's "The six-foot drivers were hammering their way to San Bernardino and the Mohave wastes . . ." Conrad says, "The narrative is so intent on numerical precision that Kipling even calculates the height of the engine driver (which is 6 feet), as if that were part of the equation." The "six-foot drivers" in question are the locomotive's shafts which impart linear motion from steam-pushed pistons to the rotary motion of the wheels. Conrad's received opinion of Kipling as a perhaps pathological worshipper of tall and masculine men (for which

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Wells and Beerbohm berated him) blinds him to the text he is reading for us, and converts machinery into an *idée reçue.*

Conrad, in fact, has to be watched when he summarizes. Kipling's "almost bait up a trawl" (Harvey recounting his skills as a fisherman) becomes in Conrad "bait up a trawl." That "the representatives of $63 million worth of railroad interests cooperate in" Cheyne's record crossing of the continent is a sloppy way of combining two things: that the pertinent railroads involved were cooperative, and the worth of all American railroads. And so on. Conrad is apt to be wide-eyed in his reporting, and careless of details.

For all its historical sweep and tracking of changing English views of America, Conrad's study will stick in most reader's minds, I suspect, for its full-length portrait of Auden. He gives as much attention to Huxley and Isherwood, but their adventures are odd and atypical. Huxley the satirist ended by glorying in what he had once knocked, and Isherwood, who once sought an environment congenial to his nature in the Third Reich found it in the California of Gerald Heard, bronzed lifeguards with a vocabulary of up to sixty words, and Swami Ramakrishna (who instructed him how to achieve "the ocean of perfection"). I once, to be polite to a lady, heard Gerald Heard lecture in St. Louis. He looked very El Greco, and spoke in long, suavely delivered sentences rich in names like Alyosha Karamazov, Epictetus, and St. Gregory of Nyssa, and in facts about the salinity of blood and seawater, evolution, and probably the transmigration of souls. Only in some high-toned Methodist preachers have I ever heard such beautiful rhetoric wrap itself around absolutely nothing.

Auden, however, belonged to this world, was an accomplished poet, was conversant with our culture in a way very few people are, and returned with irony and anguish to the Church of England. He came to America, or rather to New York, to be lonely. I think he came to insure that he was among humanity at its worst in this century. He could have gone to more terrible places, Rome for instance, but he wanted a place he could not romanticize. He recognized New York for what it is culturally, a trade center, a crossroads where everybody turns up sooner or later. It is also a city as European as it is American. It is our Alexandria, our Byzantium.

Here Auden fulfilled a desire (Conrad calls it a childish desire) to be of things while being apart from them, to live in his nursery of an apartment (by all accounts an incredibly nasty fox's den), outside of which (in bedroom slippers and unclean clothes) he delighted to play the spoiled brat to see, like an impossible child, how much he could get away with. He got away with everything, of course, as he was Auden. He became a monster of paradox, a social bully, an arrogant Christian, a foul-mouthed old man with one of the most ravaged faces in history. The more awkward to be around he became, the more people sought him out, pleaded with him to speak, and valued his acquaintance.

He would, let us guess, have been quite a different Auden if he had remained in England. He annoyed the hell out of Oxford when he returned

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there to die. (He didn't die there, but in a hotel room in Austria, where he was buried to the strains of Wagner, as if he were an adjunct to Teutonic culture.) Auden and Isherwood, Conrad tells us, came to America together. Their paths diverged, both in search of liberty, "romantic privacies," to nurture their alienation. Conrad gives a brilliant analysis of the distance that developed between the two: Isherwood's love of health, cleanliness, and the sun; Auden's contrasting plunge into senility, dirt, and darkness—California and the "lawless marches" of New York City streets.

We begin to wonder as we follow Conrad's splendidly readable text what all this has to do with America. Is it not simply that stock device of novelists, the boarding house or ship or island where it is convenient to corral one's cast of characters? Conrad admits that America is so large and diverse that it will accommodate any questing soul who cares to arrive. It is still both a wilderness and a system of megalopolises, a backward and an advanced country, a mixture of its own and practically all other cultures.

America from the beginning was a promise of renewal for every human endeavor. It was an activity of the Renaissance, whose scholars and merchant princes effected its discovery and its first exploitation. Thereafter it exhibited an innocence (and concomitant ignorance) unavailable to Europe. Compare the American and French revolutions, Washington and Napoleon. What is pristine and a bit colorless in America is experienced and vastly more colorful in Europe. Looked at the other way around, what is weary and worn in Europe is spanking new in America.

Though we are now the oldest continuous government on the planet (with the possible exceptions of England or Iceland, if you want to argue the point), we must still play the part of a recent arrival in politics and culture. Hence our appearance in the imagination of a Wells and Kipling as a clean-hearted young giant from whom energy and hope can flow to the rest of the world.

Why did Ralph Hodgson and Ford Madox Ford end their days in Ohio? Aleksandr Kerensky spent the large part of his life here. There are immigrants and immigrants, and we tend to think of them as donations to our culture, shooed to Liberty's feet by the tyrannies of other lands. Thus we got Stravinsky, Audubon, Lipchitz, Ernst, Steinmetz, Fermi. Conrad is interested in quite a different kind of immigrant, one who has come uncompelled and had other choices. The purest example of this type is Heinrich Schliemann, who became an American citizen for the sheer panache of it.

The country is rich in such people, drawn here for reasons which we cannot appreciate (such as Jessie Whitehead's preferring American manners). The real lesson for us in Peter Conrad's study may be precisely to see qualities we are blind to, or take for granted.

There is nothing in this book, for instance, that fetched over Conrad's Englishmen which would tempt me to leave my backyard. It would be a cruel and unjust punishment were I obliged to live in Taos, Los Angeles,

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or New York City. I have, without actually going there, seen Niagara Falls.

Spiritual transplanting is not easy; strange things (as Conrad shows) happen to uprooted people. America didn't work for Kipling, or Hearn, or Mann, or Brecht. Napoleon, when the British nabbed him, was on his way to become an independent American farmer. I like to imagine him as having made it, as mayor of Cincinnati. Someone should study the psychology of coming to America. Conrad has pointed the way and set the example. Would Capone have been a somebody in Sicily? Would Hitchcock have made "Psycho" in England? Would Auden have shouted to guests in his bathroom not to use more than two sheets of toilet paper?

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ROBERT MARTIN ADAMS

V. S. Naipaul

THREE PIECES OF EXTENDED REPORTAGE—Trinidad, Argentina, and Zaire—combine with a short tribute to Joseph Conrad. Eva Perón is very much a shrunken and diminished presence in the new book by V. S. Naipaul;[1] and what people will make of her presence here who've formed their ideas of Eva Perón from a musical comedy is hard to imagine. *Vérité, âpre vérité*; it's a dose to pucker the mouth. There's a lot of sour truth-telling in the new book. But where's the center, why is this a book? It's not to worry. Naipaul's center is where it's always been—the anomalies, grotesque and tragic, of half-formed provincial societies, trying to adapt themselves to formulas made elsewhere, anxiously shifting roles and images to fill or just to cover the vacancy within. Conrad provides the inevitable capstone to the arch because this was one of his basic themes, found early and pursued steadily. Naipaul's book is not only unified, it is almost obsessive.

Though the word itself is becoming a cliché, "inauthenticity" is the fundamental quality for which Naipaul has a cruelly accurate eye. The verbal self-intoxication of the black-power communards in Trinidad, who talk themselves into a couple of completely gratuitous murders, equates exactly with the bureaucracy in Zaire which on alternate days is going to mechanize and modernize the country, far beyond anything the west ever dreamed of, and return it to the ancient virtues of ancestor-worship, illiteracy, and your basic health-food diet—caterpillars, grubs, and smoked monkey. Stranger and more compelling than any of these mere absurdities is the erotic, necrotic cult growing up around the wasted but embalmed corpse of Eva Perón, to which magical powers are now attributed. The simplest real facts of her life are forgotten; the myth takes over. What does Peronism mean to its adherents, what does Argentina mean to its inhabitants? They stumble, they palter, they have no history or formulas to explain themselves; but a line of high-rise brothels stands along the Recoleta Cemetery, joint monuments to the macho values of lust and death. In a country systematically debasing its political language almost as fast as its currency, where political murder, torture, and the snatch have been institutionalized as the national way of life, the magic powers attributed to the corpse of Eva Perón are the ultimate evasion. And throughout all these muddles and deceits, Naipaul never lets us forget how curious a role the European West plays in the spiritual life of these semi-developed countries—as instigator and flatterer, as horrible example to be shunned and glittering example to be imitated, as authenticator of one's own mediocrity and artifice. Contaminated cultures are Naipaul's theme; the compass by which he navigates these treacherous waters (him-

[1] THE RETURN OF EVA PERÓN WITH THE KILLINGS IN TRINIDAD, by *V. S. Naipaul.* Knopf. $10.00.

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self of a "colored" minority within a black province of a white empire) is an understated and cosmopolitan rationalism. He writes—and has, somehow, done so from the beginning—as a committed member of the *Club des sans-Club*.

Two of the three local pieces in the present book have a special interest in that they provide background for recent novels. *Guerrillas* builds on the scaffolding thrown up in "The Killings in Trinidad"; *A Bend in the River* is similarly related to "A New King for the Congo." Apart from their inherent interest, the new essays show what very different problems Naipaul faced in converting the two different sorts of material to effective fiction. "The Killings in Trinidad" had, to start with, all too much action and a plethora of human materials; even as factual narration, it sometimes twists out of Naipaul's hands. A number of the incidents are described several times over, and the chronology of events never quite comes clear; the central character is exhibited with a wife whom he has never acquired, and some children who are not so much as counted. Even so, the narrative is overgrown with picturesque humanity. There is Hakim Jamal, for instance, a Boston black who thought himself not only extremely gorgeous, but actually the Divinity—Him, up there—and got at least one other person to agree with him. He is clearly too strong for a secondary figure, which in the novel he would have to be. He must be reduced, as part of the process of simplifying the "given" cast of characters. He becomes Peter Roche, once a hero for his sufferings as a resistance fighter in South Africa, now a helpless moral and political bankrupt who sinks with lucid understanding through one depth after another of living lies. On the other hand, the novel being written by the prospective murderer (Michael in actual life, Jimmy in Naipaul's fiction) was a sort of miraculous gift, crude and extremely funny, requiring only to be given (so to speak) its head. In one important area the fiction shifted direction completely. In the factual narrative, Gale Benson was a white English divorcee who had been living with Hakim Jamal for at least a year; she believed or pretended to believe in his divinity; she proclaimed herself his slave. She gave herself an "African" name, Halé Kimga, which was really just an anagram of Gale and Hakim. Most of this material was excess to Naipaul's fictional needs, which were for a weak and empty character, a visitor promiscuous and complacent, capable of representing those people who visit the dark corners of the world with return airline tickets in their pockets. It is Naipaul's phrase for the comfortable white liberals who tease and incite the black man to display his "authentic" rage, yet count on the civilized codes of their own culture to keep them immune. Jane has premonitions at the time of her first inadequate intercourse with Jimmy that she is playing with fire; but her restlessness and emptiness lead her on, and the final fate of her absolute disappearance, in a cloud of lies which wipe out her very presence on the island, is like a judgment of her and of people so deeply corrupted that they can "dispose of" her like rotten meat. It was the complicity between English liberals and Michael Malik—the mutual hype they perpetrated on each other—that made the disintegrating "commune" in Trinidad a deadly trap for Gale Benson; and her fictional counterpart in *Guerrillas* wanders into it with a kind of

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blind, unthinking assurance of which Naipaul recognizes the roots in Conrad's early story, "An Outpost of Progress." Like that story, *Guerrillas* deals with utterly negligible people; the important thing is not what we experience through them, but the slowly growing pressures of primitive forces that surround and ultimately crush them. It is the fact that they know so little of what they are dealing with that marks the novel unmistakably with the claws of a lion.

In the sense that the original scenario gave Naipaul much less to go on, *A Bend in the River* is probably a fuller imaginative achievement than *Guerrillas*. Indeed, the modern Congo provides a substantial background for the narrative, and social details from the travelogue carry over repeatedly. The Domain (an African think-tank, seedier than most, just as trendy, and even less rooted in anything specific), the eloquent stick carried by the Big Man (lifted in the air, it grants freedom to speak; lowered to the ground, it is an order to shut up and listen—or else!), the cult of the African mother, the décor of the river boat—all are unmistakable adaptations; and there are many others. But the characters of *A Bend in the River*, above all Salim the narrator, are the triumph of the novel, and for them there seems to be not the trace of an original, not, at any rate, in the essay on Mobutu's Congo. Salim himself is a virtuoso creation. He is an African without being of Africa, an Indian without being either Hindu or Muslim, sort of an Arab but not really. Detached, ironic, and perceptive, he falls naturally into the role of petty shop-keeper, as if it were in his blood, as it is. Among people, he is wonderfully indirect behind his openness. How deft and complex are his relations with Metty/Ali, who is a family slave but also a house-servant, an assistant in the shop, a friend, confidant, adviser, a young-man-about town (some town!), and a heavy responsibility. The scene in which Metty admits he has had a child by a scrawny little African girl is only a fraction of the novel, and not an important fraction, but it's loaded. Behind the wild reproaches, reassurances, exaggerations, and play-acting one feels a steadily growing sense of mutual affection and loneliness. In a single fictional moment, all our fixed categories of human relatedness are poured out on the floor—it is so open a scene, so unprotected yet conscious on both sides, so lit by a quick discriminating intelligence that picks its way through the disorder.

Scrappiness is the special quality of half-made societies; which half gets made seems to be very much a matter of accident, and Naipaul's comedy is built on glimpses of anomaly. A friend of Salim's has acquired a machine which will make, neatly and cheaply, thousands of flat little wooden spoons for eating ice cream. Expeditions are dispatched into the jungle, to determine which sort of wood is best suited; the project is well under way before anyone notices that not much ice cream is eaten in town. Where would one get the milk and eggs to make it with? Do you need eggs to make ice cream? Nobody, it appears, is very sure; the whole topic trails off, uncomfortably. When it is not being terrorized by rebels from the bush or armies from the capital, the town flourishes; but in the best of times, garbage is simply tossed into the streets, where mountains of

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rubble combine with vigorously disinfected taxis being pursued in slow motion by avid disinfectors to create an enchanted landscape:

> In the colonial days public vehicles had by law to be disinfected once a year by the health department. The disinfectors were entitled to a personal fee. That custom had been remembered. Any number of people wanted to be disinfectors; and now taxis and trucks weren't disinfected just once a year; they were disinfected whenever they were caught. The fee had to be paid each time; and disinfectors in their official jeeps played hide and seek with taxis and trucks among the hills of rubbish.

Meanwhile an Africa of words, artificial, exalted, and up-to-the-minute, is being woven on the Domain out of semi-bogus subsidized European magazine articles on African affairs and the megalomania of the Leader.

A special quality of *Bend in the River* is the loose fit of the narrative inside the novel. The central, and largest, episode is that of Indar, Raymond, and Yvette, transient academic inhabitants of the Domain. But in the vision of the society, this is only a brief, prosperous hollow between two waves of savagery; and for Salim, who never unequivocally accepts or rejects any situation, there have to be times outside and places beyond. He is, when he wants to be, an explanatory and analytic man; but he often tells us most about himself by small, simple acts which are allowed to speak for themselves. It has been understood from the beginning of the book that he will marry Nazruddin's daughter—not exactly under pressure from Salim's family (they are remote and hazy), not under pressure from Nazruddin, and not altogether unwillingly (she is a lovely girl, he says without enthusiasm). In the last part of the novel, during a brief visit to London, he does become engaged to Kareisha. But on the way back to Africa, he finds himself in Brussels with a little spare time between planes, and goes to a bar, "with women."

> What followed, some time later, was brief and meaningless and reassuring. It didn't lessen the value of what I had had in Africa [his passionate affair with Yvette]: that was no delusion, that remained true. And it removed the special doubt I felt about my engagement to Kareisha, whom I had not yet even kissed.

The prostitute he visits thinks herself in danger of being overpowered by his male psychic fluids; she goes through a little perfunctory ritual to exorcise him. She does it "as if joking," so, for him at least, she is serious. "Meaningless and reassuring" don't in any way agree; and if the episode reassures Salim concerning his "special doubt," doesn't it all the more disconcert the reader, who is given, and at this late date, new dimensions of histrionic duplicity to meditate in Salim, whom he has no choice but to trust?

Small scenes from large novels, but they suggest something of Naipaul's

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smooth and effortless power, his gift for weaving our impressions into a pattern at once free and firm, and unobtrusively implying behind it the third dimension of a mystery. Unlike Conrad, he does not make constant use of words like "mystery," "enigma," "mirage"—does not beat on the door of the indefinite till it rings hollow in our ears. But that there is another side of his characters besides the mechanism that makes them walk and worry, he never lets us forget.

Sharp clarity of social vision, a special *frisson* of imaginative life, and prose of quiet, supple strength are the traits which enable Naipaul to combine fiction and factual reporting, without corrupting either. Earlier books on the history of Trinidad (*The Loss of El Dorado*) and on modern India (*A Wounded Civilization*) show the same dispassionate accuracy when the culture being dissected is Naipaul's "own." He may well be one of those rare, lucid minds, distressing to apologists and sentimentalists alike, who write on the dead level. It's a quality one must live in an age of performers to appreciate.

Some complaints have been heard from time to time, and the new book sufficiently answers, if an answer were needed, the most mechanical of them. Though his theme is half-formed societies, and he observes them with cold eyes, Naipaul is neither a partisan nor a satirist. He recognizes savagery, however disguised, in black Africa and in white Argentina; he sees obscurantism and rationalization for what they are, wherever they are. The appalling Argentine argument that torture is all right when used for proper purposes equates exactly with Raymond's academic rationalizations of a murderous barbarian chief 's pretentious obscurantism. The true villains of "The Killings in Trinidad" are not the blacks who hacked to pieces Gale Benson and Joe Skerritt, but those London editors, interviewers, and show-biz characters who put the hype on poor, half-educated Michael Malik, and taught him to put it on others. They persuaded him that he was black, that he was oppressed, that he was charismatic, that he was talented—and finally that his envies and lusts were the motive power of human progress. There is blame enough, surely, to go around. But to see nihilism or prejudice in an acute and disillusioned view of empty gestures and fraudulent ideologies is, I should think, to imply rather uncomfortable limitations in one's own vision of things.

That's the hard answer, but there's also a soft one, and as a Naipaul-watcher of some standing, I welcome a chance to say a word in behalf of a novel that hasn't (to my mind) received all the kudos it deserves. *A House for Mr. Biswas* isn't a flawless piece of work, but it's an extraordinarily warm, grubby, and funny fiction. The life and circumstances of Mohun Biswas, sign-painter, journalist, and shopkeeper in the slums of Trinidad, provide a scrawny, scrabbly epic of the ignobly decent. Mr. Biswas (he is always Mr. Biswas, from his very cradle) has the scruffy tenacity of a mongrel pup brought up in a gutter. His dream is to have a house of his own, and after many vicissitudes and much yapping from his wife's family, he finally gets it—after a fashion. It is a romance of low-grade roguery, narrated with great inwardness and real affection, and in assem-

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bling an image of this extraordinary author, one wouldn't want to risk overlooking it. There are astringencies in the later work, and all for the better. *Guerrillas* is a powerfully unpleasant novel. But it's worth reminding oneself that the substructure of all Naipaul's work is both human and humane.

Notes on Contributors

DANIEL HOFFMAN's book-length poem, *Brotherly Love,* from which the selection in this issue is taken, will be published by Random House in March 1981, at the beginning of the 300th anniversary of Penn's Royal Charter. Mr. Hoffman, poet in residence at the University of Pennsylvania, recently edited the *Harvard Guide to Contemporary American Writing.*

BARBARA KERR DAVIS'* novel, *Letters to My Husband's Analyst,* was published by Hawthorne Books in 1979. She lives in San Diego, and is at work on another novel.

The book from which GREG KUZMA's* "Poems for My Brother" are taken will be published in 1981 by Harry Duncan's Abattoir Editions. Mr. Kuzma is Professor of English at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln. His brother Jeff was killed in an automobile accident in September 1977.

JAMES McCONKEY's most recent novel is *The Tree House Confessions,* published by Dutton in 1979. "Passages Early and Late" will be included in the second part of a projected three-volume autobiographical novel.

JAMES BAKER HALL lives in Lexington, Kentucky.

ANDREW HUDGINS* teaches part-time at Auburn University in Montgomery, Alabama. He has recently completed a book of poems.

Last June JANE ELLEN GLASSER* received an M.A. in Humanities from Old Dominion University. She lives in Norfolk, Virginia.

DEAN FLOWER teaches modern fiction and American literature at Smith College, and is a frequent contributor to this Review.

DAVID KUBAL is a Professor of English at California State University, Los Angeles.

GEORGE KEARNS*, who teaches in Rutgers University's English Department, recently published a *Guide to Ezra Pound's Selected Cantos.*

JEROME MAZZARO's *Post-Modern American Poetry* was published by the University of Illinois Press last spring; his next book, *The Figure of Dante,* is forthcoming from Princeton University Press.

This fall North Point Press will publish GUY DAVENPORT's *The Geography of the Imagination.* Mr. Davenport teaches English at the University of Kentucky.

The most recent book by ROBERT MARTIN ADAMS is *The Lost Museum* (Viking), a study of art works which, though destroyed or lost, can still be known from copies, imitations, or transpositions to some other medium. Mr. Adams is a former Advisory Editor of this Review.

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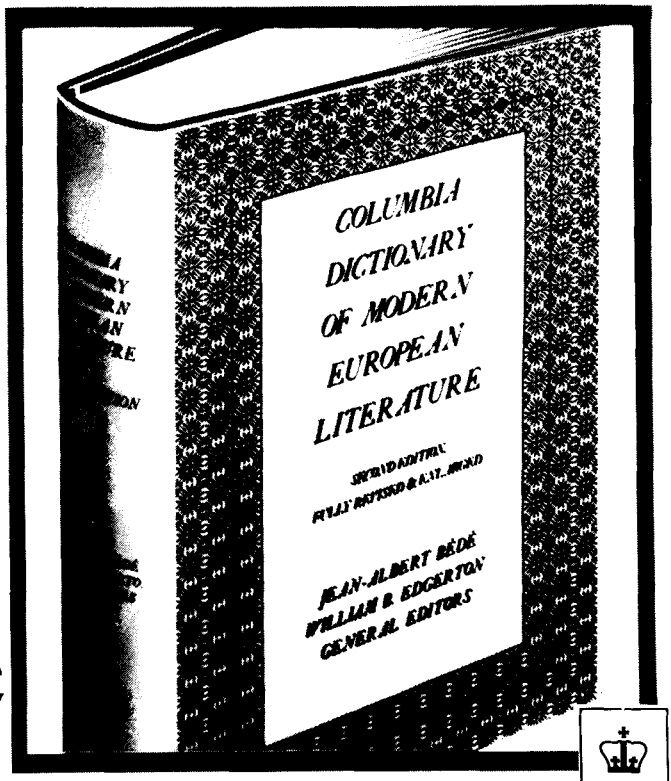

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